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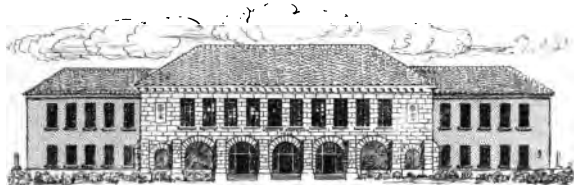
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# ALICE AND TOM

KATE LOUISE BROWN



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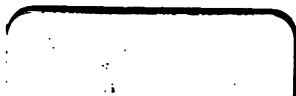
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# **ALICE AND TOM**

## **OR, THE RECORD OF A HAPPY YEAR**

**BY**

**KATE LOUISE BROWN .**  
==

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY**

**BOSTON, U. S. A.  
D. C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS**

**1899**

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TO  
HENRY TURNER BAILEY  
GOOD COMRADE AND INSPIRATION  
OF MANY ON THIS ROAD

1899





## FOREWORD

IN introducing "Alice and Tom" to a wider circle of grown-up and child friends, the author has endeavored to present : —

*First*, a picture of free, healthy, hearty child-life : of loving and courteous relations between child and child, and between children and their older friends and lovers.

*Second*, a picture of child-life in its relations with the great, outside world of nature ; a quickening of the recognition of that kinship between all created things ; of the love, tenderness, and reverence which should grow from this knowledge ; of the growth of a sense of law and beauty which such knowledge inspires.

*Third*, a realization of what the poets and great thinkers have felt about these things.

While the book does not claim to outline any series of nature lessons, it aims to present clearly a definite method of procedure. It is hoped that many of the chapters will suggest a series of lessons, which the teacher may carry out, specimens in hand. These lessons should precede rather than follow the reading of the chapters.

"Alice and Tom" is the result of a long and happy experience with a flock of hearty, lovable country children.

Through this experience the author has come to realize :—

*First*, that knowledge springs from actual contact with the outside world, rather than from books or theories.

*Second*, that a child's contact with common things, rather than with strange or unusual objects, forms the best basis of knowledge.

*Third*, that affectionate interest springing from the child's free choice of material is the secret of all progress.

NOTE.—The author's thanks are due to Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. for their courtesy in permitting the use of selections from their editions of Lowell, Longfellow, Whittier, etc.,—also to Edith M. Thomas, Margaret Deland, Louise Imogen Guiney, Frank Dempster Sherman, Clinton Scollard, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, John Burroughs, and others, for the use of original material.

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# ALICE AND TOM

## OR THE RECORD OF A HAPPY YEAR

---

### I.—ALICE

“Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever:  
Do noble things, not dream them all day long;  
And so make life, death, and that vast forever,  
One grand, sweet song.”

CHARLES KINGSLEY.



WANT you  
to know my  
Alice. Is  
there room in  
your hearts  
for another  
friend?

Alice is as  
round as an ap-  
ple, and as red  
as a cherry. She  
calls herself  
“half-past seven:”  
what can that mean?

How those big blue  
eyes of hers twinkle with fun or shine with joy!  
My Alice has two dimples; one in her right cheek,  
the other in her chin.

"Where is the dimple for your left cheek, little one?"

"It lost itself one day," says the maiden, trying hard to keep a sober face.

My Alice has brown hair, "nut-brown locks" in two braids. Mother ties each braid with a ribbon to match her daughter's dress. The ribbons are too often missing. Who can tell what becomes of them?

"They lose themselves," says Alice. "Please, mother dear, pin them on."

Alice likes to go to school. She says it is "just fun."

She is very fond of play, however. She can run even faster than a boy, and toss a ball exactly as well.

I have seen her climb very tall trees.

She is a happy child, with a heart brimful of joy. When you read this book you will know why Alice is so happy.

Here is my friend: will you be her friend and love her, too?





## II. — TOM

" Blessings on thee, little man,  
Barefoot boy, with cheek of tan ! . . .  
With thy red lip, redder still  
Kissed by strawberries on the hill."

JOHN G. WHITTIER.



If you are Alice's friend you must be Tom's also. Tom is nine years old.

I could not call Tom "as round as an apple," for he is very tall and thin. His legs are long and hard : he is proud of that.

He will say to his mother, " Just feel the calves of my legs ! See how hard they are ! They are hard as rocks ! "

Tom is as brown as a berry, with two big, sober, dark eyes. Alice's eyes shine and twinkle. Tom's are like the golden-brown waters in the trout pools.

Tom does not like his short, black, curly locks. He uses soap and water to make his hair lie



smoothly. It stays so about five minutes. Tom calls it "the trial of his life."

Every little while he begs to have it cut. Once a year, in summer, he is allowed to have it shaved. This is a joyful day for Tom.

We laugh at him, and his father says, "Old fellow, you look exactly as you did when you were six months old."

"It is like Uncle Will's, and he is a Harvard senior," replies Tom proudly.

I, who know Tom so well, think him a little man. He is brave, kind, and gentle. You cannot make him tell a lie.

He loves to share with others, and his heart is very tender toward weak, small things.

Shall he be your friend, too?

### III. — RAGS

"Ah, Blanco, did I worship God  
As truly as you worship me,  
Or follow where my Master trod,  
With your humility,  
Did I sit fondly at his feet  
As you, dear Blanco, sit at mine,  
And watch him with a love as sweet,  
My life would grow divine."

J. G. HOLLAND, *To my Dog Blanco.*



EAR! dear! please  
don't leave *me*  
out," barks Rags,  
funniest and cur-  
liest of dogs.

His coat is like  
a snarl of gray silk.  
His eyes are dark  
and sharp.

You should see  
his tongue; it is  
like a fluttering  
pink rose-petal.

Tom was sound  
asleep one Christ-

mas morning, but in his dreams he heard a queer  
noise. He awoke and looked about. By the bed  
was a big basket, and the noise came from it.

Tom opened the basket and out jumped a little ball of gray down. It raced over the floor. It smelled of Tom's stockings and growled at his boots. Then it hopped on the bed and kissed Tom. It tried to tell Tom about coming from grandma's.

"Bow-wow! How are you, old fellow? I am well and hearty! I came from grandma's. She is a fine old lady! Too bad she is n't *your* grandma, too.

"I came in the cars. It was a long way and I got tired of that basket. The cars made a great noise. I just barked to tell them to keep still.

"I'm glad I'm here. I can run and jump and roll a ball. I can play 'dead dog.' If you hide a ball, I can find it. Now hurry up! I want my breakfast! Wow!"

Rags has two great faults: he *will* chase cats and he *will* leave his bones in the wrong places. He drops them under the bed, and tucks them away in the easy-chairs and sofas. One dreadful day father found a big bone in his silk hat.

But the little dog's heart is full of love for Alice and Tom. Everywhere they go, Rags would go too. If mother permitted it, he would sleep with Tom every night.

No, we must not leave Rags out, must we, old fellow?

"Bow-wow-wow! Leave *me* out? I guess not! I'm a good dog! Wow!"

## IV. — THE LITTLE LADY IN GRAY

"Oh, sweet and low the south wind blows,  
And through the brown field calling goes,  
'Come, Pussy! Pussy Willow!  
Within your close brown wrapper stir;  
Come out and show your silver fur;  
Come, Pussy! Pussy Willow!'"

ANON.

I.

It was a bright, cold day in March, and Alice and Tom had started for school very early. They were looking carefully on both sides of the road.

"There must be some out by this time," said Tom. "I am going over the wall to see."

Now, in the bushes by the brook was — *some one* just arrived in town. She had on a gray fur hood and a brown coat — the dear little lady! Tom's bright eyes spied her.



"There is just one," he cried. "We'll carry it to Miss Merriam."

Tom picked the brown twig very carefully.

"You dear soft thing," cried Alice, smoothing the little lady.

"Wow!" said something else.

"Rags! you bad dog, why did you follow us?" and Tom looked very sternly at the little dog.

Rags lay down flat upon the ground and wagged a beseeching tail. His eyes seemed to say, "Do let me go to school! I *will* be good."

"No," said Tom firmly, "you are not wanted at school. You must go right home. Do you remember how you chased poor Mary Ann the last time you came? No, *no*, Rags, — go — right home!"

Rags knew he must go when his master spoke like that. He trotted sadly up the road until he came to the turn; then he sat down.

Alice and Tom went on to the brown school-house under the elms. Miss Merriam was already there hard at work.

"Oh, the first Pussy Willow!" she cried as Tom handed her the little lady in gray. "I am so glad to see you, you dear little thing."

Tom put the Pussy Willow in a pretty glass vase, and set it on a table where every one could see the welcome visitor.

I think their schoolroom would please you. It was large and airy, and full of sunshine. The

walls were a soft gray-blue and hung with pictures.

Over the fireplace the dear Christ-Child gazed from his mother's arms with big, tender eyes. There was an open piano, a row of plants in each window, a cabinet for collections, and a long sand table.

Two goldfish swam about in a glass globe, and on the window-seat lay a white cat fast asleep. The sun shone warmly on her soft fur and the yellow ribbon about her neck.

A pretty canary was just taking his morning bath.

On the blackboard was written in golden letters,

“ Little children, love one another.”

## II.

The school children were all glad to see Pussy Willow. They begged to sing their song about her.

“ Oh ! you Pussy Willow,  
Pretty little thing.”

After the song each child told something about her. Miss Merriam wrote the sentences upon the board.

They looked at Pussy very carefully to find out all they could.



## PUSSY WILLOW.

Pussy Willow comes in March.  
She grows on a bush. She grows by the  
brook.  
The branch has red-brown bark.  
She cuddles down on the branch.  
Every pussy has a little shelf to sit on.  
All the pussies do not sit on the same side  
of the branch.  
They peep at one another.  
Pussy Willow is shaped like an egg.  
She wears a gray fur hood.  
She has on a little brown coat.  
Pretty soon Pussy will take off her fur hood.  
Then she will have some yellow curls.

"Is this all you can tell?" asked Miss Merriam.

"Wow!" said a sharp little voice. Every one jumped!

Mary Ann Haskins, the school cat, jumped also, and her back went up.

Above the edge of the paper basket peeped a wild little gray head. Two black eyes shone, and a pink tongue wagged back and forth.

"You have n't asked *me*," barked Rags. "So that's a pussy, is it? I call that a strange kind of a cat! No use to a dog! Always up a tree! Don't think much of that kind of a cat! Now

Mary Ann is more to my taste, and " — but Rags never finished his story.

A strong arm took hold of him. The next moment he was out in the cold, cold world.

"Rags!" cried Tom, "go home or I shall lock you up."

Rags knew what that meant, very well. On his way he met Maps White, his great crony.

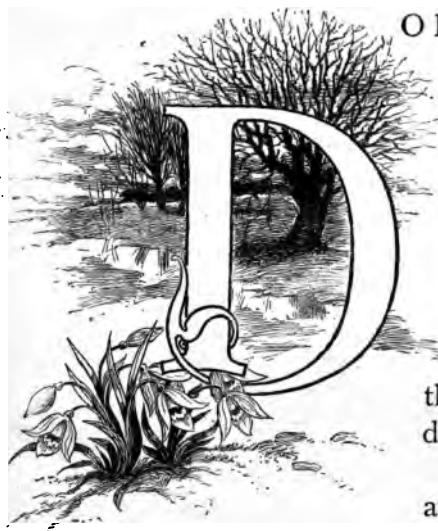
"Where have you been, Rags?" he asked.

"Oh, just at the schoolhouse," replied Rags. "I have begun plant-study. We took the pussy willow to-day. My story was the best of all."

## V. — LITTLE SNOWDROP

"And I believe the brown earth takes delight  
In the new snowdrop looking back at her."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.



OLLY MAY

was the very smallest child in school. Though shy and unwilling to talk, she heard everything that was said and thought a good deal about it.

One day, soon after the pussy willow lesson, she found a little snowdrop. It was in a sunny spot in Grandpa Lowell's garden.

"May I have it, grandpa?" she asked, with eager, shining face.

"I know where you want to take it," said grandpa, with a twinkle in his kind old eyes.

So the dear little flower was taken up carefully with plenty of earth. It was put in a small pot, and carried all the way to school in Dolly's own hands.

Now little Snowdrop was on the table, and all the children were looking at her. Do you wonder that Dolly's face was so bright?

"This is our first real flower," said Miss Merriam, "and the very youngest child brought it. That makes it the more welcome. We all like the snowdrop: tell me why?"

"I like it because it is so brave," declared Tom. "It comes up in the cold, sometimes right out of the snow."

"I like its white dress and pale green waist," said Susie Miner.

"See it hang over like a little bell!" exclaimed Mabel Weston.

"I like the leaves," said Alice. "They are long and narrow like grass blades. They are darker green than the 'waist,' as Susie calls it. They look so pretty against the pure white of the flower."

Miss Merriam took the plant very gently from the pot.

"What a funny root," said Bob Mason, "just like a tiny onion."

"Have you seen other roots like this?"

The children thought a moment, then mentioned the lily, the tulip, and the crocus.

"We call such a root a bulb," said Miss Merriam. "The bulb is packed full of food for the young plant. That is why it comes so early, and has the strength to push its way up through the frozen soil. There are other bulbs: see if you can find out about them."

Miss Merriam then wrote on the board the lines at the head of this chapter.

"I like that so much!" said Beth Fairchild. "The snowdrop really seems to be peeping at the earth. Is the earth our mother, too? I read somewhere 'our mother earth.'"

"I think we can call her 'mother' since all we have in our bodies comes from her. She gives us food and clothing, and were it not for her kind nourishing we could not live," replied Miss Merriam.

The snowdrop remained in school all day. The children gave it many loving glances. They tried to draw it, and Dolly made whole rows of funny, crooked little flowers all looking down.

When the new sewing-cards came, — oh joy! On every card was a snowdrop to sew in green and white silk.


No wonder Dolly went home with pink cheeks.

## VI. — THE TREE BABIES

"Do the little brown twigs complain  
That they have n't a leaf to wear?  
Or the grass when the wind and the rain  
Pull at her matted hair?

"Do the buds that the leaves left bare  
To strive with their wintry fate,  
In a moment of deep despair  
Destroy what they cannot create?  
Oh, Nature is teaching us there,  
To patiently watch and wait."

A. E. P.



T was a rainy day.  
The cold North  
Wind roared about  
the brown school-  
house. The drops  
raced and chased  
down the window  
panes.

The little pupils  
were hard at work  
all the morning.  
They did not care if  
it was stormy.

At last Miss Mer-  
riam told them to put  
away their books.

She called Tom to her and said something in a low tone. He left the room, but soon returned with a wet branch from the horse-chestnut tree.

"Let us talk about the tree babies," said Miss Merriam. "I have watched them out in the cold and snow; they are brave little things."

"I should think such a storm would kill them," said Beth.

"It did n't kill Pussy Willow," remarked Bob. "There are buds on the trees all winter, and they don't die."

Miss Merriam brought a jar from the ante-room. "Here are some twigs I have had in water several days," she said.

"Why, the buds are bursting open," cried Daisy, "and there are other leaves inside."

"Are they just like the outside leaves?"

"Oh no, they are not so thick. They are a different color, too. The outside leaves are all brown. The inner ones are light green, with brown on the tips."

"What are the outside leaves good for?"

"I know — I know!" cried Alice, "they keep the bud from getting cold."

"The mother-tree takes good care of her leaf-children," said Miss Merriam. "All winter long the leaf-babies in their warm coats swing up and down. They do not mind the rain or the snow; the cold does not touch them."

"They are waiting for spring time, for growing time. They are in no hurry, they take plenty of time."

"Dear little leaf-babies!"

## VII. — BARE TWIGS

**B**ARE twigs in autumn are signs for sadness ;  
We feel that the good time is well-nigh past ;  
The glow subdued and the voice of gladness,  
And frosty whispers in every blast.

Bare twigs in April enhance our pleasure ;  
We know the good time is yet to come ;  
With leaves and flowers to fill summer's measure,  
And countless songs ere the birds be dumb.

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM.



## VIII. — THE HORSE-CHESTNUT

### A WONDERFUL STORY-BOOK

"The Tree's early leaf-buds were bursting their brown ;  
'Shall I take them away?' said the Frost, sweeping down.

'No, leave them alone  
Till the blossoms have grown,'

Prayed the Tree, while he trembled from rootlet to crown."

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSSON.

"TOM," said Alice that same day, "let's have some branches of our own to study."

"All right," agreed Tom, "but what shall we choose?"

"I'll ask mother," said Alice.

Mrs. Pryor advised taking the same kind of branch they had seen at school, — the horse-chestnut. "All the parts are so large," she said, "that it is easy to study."

Alice kept her branch in a jar of water in her south window. Every day she watched it, and talked with her mother about the unfolding. For nearly a week the buds seemed to remain the same.

"Oh dear! I don't believe they will *ever* open," she said at last, tired of no reward for her watching.

"Remember what your little verse says," replied Mrs. Pryor soothingly.

'Oh, Nature is telling us there,  
To patiently watch and wait.'

The best things are often the slowest. If you would be a true Nature-lover, Alice, you must learn to look often, and always very patiently."

One day it did seem as if the buds were growing larger. Surely, the tree-babies inside must be stirring! Their cradles were now too small.

The next day one could see that the buds were really opening. The brown bud-scales, or little waterproof coats, were not so tightly folded. They were even starting a little at the edges.

Alice had noticed that the horse-chestnut bud was much larger than other buds, and had a rich reddish-brown color. It was covered on the outside with thick leaves or scales. The whole bud was sticky with a brown varnish. This was to keep out the wet and cold.

When these scales unfolded, she saw still another set. They were thinner and a light green. The brown varnish was on the tips wherever they were exposed.

Alice noticed that these inner leaflets gradually grew longer and longer. Every day they stretched upward a little farther.

"The outer scales have rolled down, mother," said the little girl. "But that inner set grows longer so very slowly."

"Perhaps it has something precious to guard, Alice. What do you think it may be?"

"Oh, leaves, I suppose, and perhaps blossoms. They *are* precious things! Perhaps the inside scales are wise, after all."

Very soon the inner scales parted, and Alice saw bits of light brown fuzz peeping out.

"The babies are getting restless," said Mrs. Pryor; "they are kicking off their blankets."

From that time on the daily watch became very exciting. The inner scales parted more and more. Their work of protection was nearly over. The leaf clusters were tightly folded like the fingers of a baby, and covered with the woolly fuzz.

By and by they began to spread. Bits of tender green peeped out. The seven little leaf-parts slowly unrolled.

They were like timid children who look about to see if any one means to hurt them. But they were soon trustful children. Even the smallest leaf-part spread out as much as it could to find the beautiful light.

At first the stem was short, and the leaf-parts turned down over it. Did they regret the warm, safe bud-home they had left? But the brave little stem kept pushing on, longer and longer. The timid leaflets took courage and spread out more and more.

They were the most exquisite green, with a perfect feather-veining. They brought the spring to Alice's little room, and her heart unfolded with the tender leaves.

## IX. — THE HORSE-CHESTNUT

### *Continued*

“Nature never hurries; atom by atom, little by little, she achieves her work.” — RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

AS the buds unfolded, Alice saw they were not all alike. The large end ones had both flower and leaf clusters in them. The smaller side buds had only leaves.

Both leaf and flower clusters were covered with the fuzzy blankets, which turned a light brown when they were exposed to the air.

She found out another thing, too. The horse-chestnut leaves did not always have seven parts. Many of the side clusters were only five-parted. Mrs. Pryor told her that she had found leaves in six and nine parts.

“Why is the flower cluster always in the middle?” asked the child.

“Think a moment,” said her mother; “which is really the most precious part?”

“I suppose the flowers,” said Alice slowly; “they are such beauties when they are full-grown.”

“But you must have even a better reason than that. What will the flowers make by and by?”

"Oh! nuts, and nuts make trees. I see now."

"Yes, that is true. The good little leaves do their part, and the tree could not get on without them. But Nature always guards her seeds most carefully.



"That is why we find the apple and orange seeds in the very

centre. That is why the peach and cherry have their hard cases. You might plant all the leaves on the tree and nothing would grow from them.

"Even the tiniest flower has its seeds cherished in the safest place in its very heart."

"It is all so wonderful," said Alice with a sigh; "and there is so much to know, mother dear."

"Knowing means growing," said Mrs. Pryor, patting the bright cheek next to her.

But Alice thought the twigs as wonderful as the buds. She counted three kinds of marks or scars upon them.

First there were the horseshoes, each studded with its row of dainty nail-heads. Alice saw that some of the horseshoes had more nails than others.

When she asked her mother about it, Mrs. Pryor told her that the horseshoe scar was made when the leaf stalk dropped from the twig.

Each dot was the broken end of a bundle of

fibres, which ran from the branch through the leaf stem to each of the divisions of the leaf. This bundle formed the mid-vein of each leaf.

"So you see, Alice, if there are five bundles there will be five dots; seven bundles, seven dots. Now what do the dots tell us about the leaflets?"

Alice thought a moment: "Five dots — five bundles. One bundle to each leaflet. Oh, I see, five bundles, five leaflets! Why, mother dear, the number of dots tells the number of leaflets in the leaf that grew there. The twig is like a story-book, is n't it?"

"It is, indeed," said Mrs. Pryor, "and a most wonderful history. I have studied it for years and still I am always finding some new truth."

"It's very convenient to have you for a mother," said the child, with a little caress. "Now you'll tell me all those stories."

But Alice still had to use her eyes in spite of the convenient story-teller at hand. She found sets of rings running around the twigs.

Mother led her to see that they were made by the dropping off of the bud-scales. She saw that some of the spaces between the bud-scale scars



were longer than others. This showed that the branch had grown more in some years than in others.

In the forks of the branches Alice found still another kind of scar. It was circular in shape and sunken toward the middle. Alice thought it looked like the seal her mother used in sealing letters.

She also noticed dots scattered over the surface of the twig. Mrs. Pryor told her that these were little holes out of which the gases in the tree escaped. In the older parts these dots had become long rifts or gashes.

So you see the horse-chestnut bud wrote its own life story on its branches. All these things Alice learned day by day, as she watched her buds open.

The leaf-clusters unfolded beautifully, but the little flower-clusters faded in a few days. Mother Nature was not willing to have all her work carried on in the house and ahead of time.

Later, Alice saw the great clusters of pink and white on the trees. They were all the more lovely to her because she had been watching the branch with new eyes.

## X. — THE BABY CROCUS

"A baby crocus has literally its own little dome, — *domus* or *duomo*, — within which in early spring it lives a delicate convent life of its own, quite free from all worldly cares and dangers, exceedingly ignorant of things in general, but itself brightly golden and perfectly formed before it is brought out." — JOHN RUSKIN.



It was Sunday afternoon, and Mrs. Bennett sat waiting for her little son to return from Sunday-school. In he came, fresh and rosy from his long walk and North Wind's kisses.

"Oh, mother," he cried, "just see this little flower! I found it in a yard on the avenue. It was cuddled in a corner where the coping made a bend."

"Why, it is a crocus,



the first I've seen this season. But, Tom, you must not take flowers from a yard. That will never, never do!"

"Oh!" cried Tom, aghast. "I did n't mean to do wrong. But the little thing looked so cold and lonesome, I thought I would bring it to you."

"I am very fond of crocuses," said his mother. "There is something so tender and delicate in this little flower. I know of nothing sweeter unless it is a baby snowdrop."

"And it's so brave, mother. My crocus was coming right up in the snow. Snowdrops and crocuses must be strong to do that, even if they seem tender."

"There's a good reason for that, Tom."

"What is it?" And Tom's eyes looked very eager, as they did always at a new idea.

"Wait a little, my boy. When we can get a crocus bulb to study, I will show you what I mean."

"It seems as if we had to wait for everything." And Tom gave a sigh.

"Yes, indeed," laughed Mrs. Bennett. "Life is made up of waiting. Mothers have to wait to see things grow in their children."

"Put your flower in water, and come to dinner. I know some one who does n't like to be kept waiting in her kitchen, Sundays of all days."

The next Tuesday Tom came tumbling in, eager to find his mother.

"There's a whole bed of crocuses on the lawn!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Mrs. Bennett, smiling; "I have visited them every day since the first green blade pricked through the ground. This was planned as a surprise for you. Now we can have our bulb."

"I'll go and get one this minute," cried Tom, starting up.

"Will you take up the plant before the blossom is fully out?"

Tom was silent for a moment. "No, I won't," he replied at last. "It is n't fair for the plant to work so hard to make a flower, and then not have the chance to let it grow. I'll wait."

"That is right," said Mrs. Bennett; "even plants should be respected in their rights. But I think by to-morrow you may have your bulb."

When the waiting time was over and Tom took up his bulbs, he gave a great cry.

"Mother! mother!" he said. "Just look here! See this large bulb with three little ones growing from it. And there are ever so many thread-like roots growing from the bottom of the big bulb. Is the big bulb a mother, and are the little ones her children?"

"Yes, Tom, or at least they are little houses for them to live in. The large bulb is anxious to have her children close beside her.

"She does not scatter seed like some flower

mothers, to fall and grow wherever it will. Her children are part of herself, and she gives her very life to feed them.

"When the buds are fully formed and ready to send their flower children on the earth journey, then the mother bulb dies : her work is done."

"Oh! that seems too bad," and tears shone in Tom's brown eyes.

"That is mother-love, my boy, the world over. But let me cut one of the tiny bulbs open. What do you see, Tom?"

"I see a little yellow speck in the white."

"That is the beginning of a baby crocus. The little thing lives in its cosy bulb-home until it is perfectly able to rise in the world as a grown-up flower."

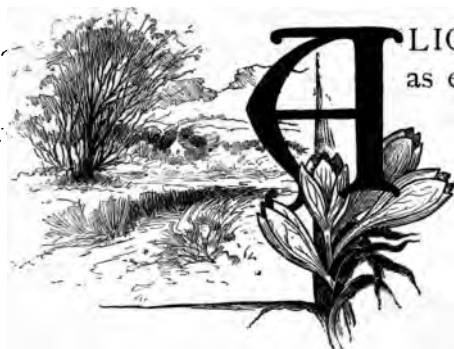
"Is that why it is so strong and can push its way up through the hard soil?" cried Tom with excited eyes.

"Yes, dear. Now isn't this story of crocus life as good as any fairy tale?"

"It is wonderful!" said Tom, earnestly.

## XI. — THE CROCUS GROWN UP

“Where March winds whistle keen and cold,  
The crocus opes its fairy gold.”



ALICE was just as eager as Tom to know about the crocus. She loved to lie flat upon the lawn and look down

into their fairy cups, — “little palaces of delight,” her father called them.

One day she ran to her mother with a great discovery.

“Mother! mother!” she cried; “those crocuses are so queer! They grow in little bunches — a lot of leaves in a bunch, with one or two buds in the middle. And the lower part is wrapped in strips of something like tissue paper.

“There ’ll be one on one side of the stalk, then the next one will be on the other side and reach farther up, and so on. Sometimes there ’ll be three or four of the strips.”

"Many of the spring bulb-flowers have that covering or sheath," said Mrs. Pryor.

"The flower stalk is very tender and needs to be protected from the cold. The sweet little bud that is pushing its way up is even more delicate."

Alice thought the crocus leaf very pretty. It was long and green like a grass blade, only a darker green and much thicker.

It had a white stripe running up the middle out to the very tip. The under part of the leaf was very curious. I will not tell you about it, for I should like to have you see it for yourself.

Tom's crocuses were hardy little things, many of them six or seven inches high. There were very white ones, golden at the hearts, yet even the whitest had a few faint marks of purple.

Alice was specially fond of the orange-colored cups. They were smaller than the others, and beautifully marked on the outside of the petals with groups of fine black lines.

Alice noticed that the stalks were brightly steeped with the general color of the flower about half way down, then shaded into white.

Each delicate cup was cut in six petals; three large outside ones, and three smaller ones that stood modestly within.

Every petal was exquisite in its veining of a darker shade. At night the petals folded into a closed bud. But when the sunshine came in the morning, each fairy palace would open its door.

The little golden lady inside with her three shining maids of honor would peep out into the spring world. One by one the petals would curve out until the airy cups swung like bright bubbles among the green leaves.

Oh! there is nothing more beautiful than a crocus among all of Mother Nature's children. I have told you only a very little. Watch some crocuses yourself next year, and see if I am not right.

About this time Miss Merriam gave her children this verse to learn.

"Come, gather the crocus cups with me  
And dream of summer coming :  
Saffron and purple and snowy white  
Before the first bee's humming."

## XII. — WHAT A SEED CAN TELL

"As wonderful things are hidden away  
In the heart of a little brown seed,  
As ever were found in the fairy net  
Of which children sometimes read."

I.



YOU must not think Miss Merriam was idle all this time. The children studied the horse-chestnut twig at school, as Alice and Tom were doing at home.

Perhaps Alice and Tom got more out of it than the rest, because they had so much help and companionship in the study. At any rate they were glad to give their extra knowledge to the class.

The children painted their twigs in water colors on drawing-paper, and modelled them in clay. The first work was a slow process, as they had to try many times before they mixed the paints just

right to get the peculiar red-brown of the bark and bud-scales.

One day Miss Merriam gave each child a bean, and asked him to drop it in a cup of water that stood on the table. The next day the same beans were given out again.

"Do your beans look as they did yesterday?" inquired the teacher.

The children thought not. They agreed that the beans were larger and softer. Bessie noticed that the skin was loose and wrinkled now. The day before it had been on very tight.

Several of the pupils tried to separate the skin from a bean that had not been soaked. They saw that parts of the inside came off with it.

"Now take off the skin of your soaked bean very carefully," said Miss Merriam.

"My bean has broken in two pieces," said Daisy.

"So has mine," cried Hal, "and there is some juice between the pieces."

"I see a little bunch at the top," said Alice.

"Look at the bunch carefully."

"I see a tiny white leaf!"

"I see two white leaves."

"What is between them?"

"It looks like a stem."

"You are right; now what have we found in the bean? What shall we call it?"

"*A plant*," burst out Dolly, "'cause my snow-drop had a stem and leaves."



"Every seed has a little plant shut up in it."

"*Every seed in the world?*"

"Yes, every seed in the world has a little plant, or at least the beginnings of one. Many seeds, however, are so small that you cannot see the plant without putting it under the microscope."

"I told Tom you would find something lovely in those beans," said Alice, with a glowing face.

"What shall we call the seed itself?"

"It is a house or a box," said Beth.

"I like to call it a cradle, and the plant a baby."

## II.

"Now let us think of the human baby. What does it do?"

"Our newest baby sleeps all the time," said little Frida in a very important manner.

"All young babies sleep the greater part of the time. Their sleepy time is growing time, just as ours is. And the plant-baby is no exception. It sleeps until something says, 'Wake up!'"

"What says 'Wake up,' Miss Merriam?"

"I will not tell you now because I want you to find out and tell me, later."

"Our baby eats when he does n't sleep," put in Frida.

"So does the dear plant-baby. It must eat as any living thing does. God puts its food in the

cradle with it. Oh, little baby bean plant has so much food in those thick halves of its cradle!

"That is why it is able to grow two leaves as well as a stem. Little morning-glory baby has only enough food-jelly to grow a stem in the seed. It must make leaves by its own labor."

"Oh! I do fink that's too bad," said Hal with such a grieved face that the children shouted.

Miss Merriam showed them two boxes full of loam and sand which Mr. Pryor had sent over from his greenhouse.

Rows of holes had been made in the sand, and each child in turn was allowed to plant a bean. After the earth was put back over the seeds, Frida took the watering-pot and gave them a good drink.

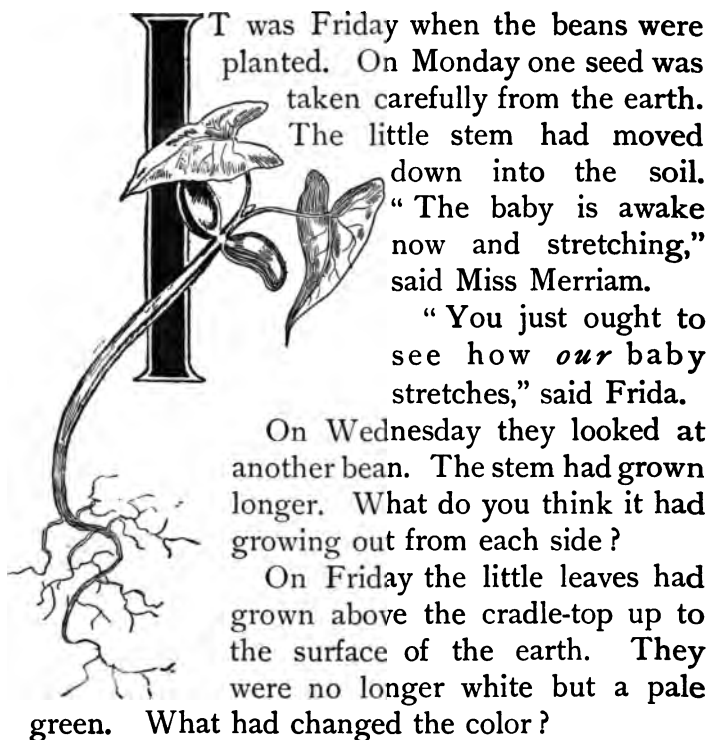
The boxes were put on the window seat, and Mary Ann was kindly requested not to sit on either of them. The sunshine fell warmly on the brown earth.

Overhead the little canary sang, "Spring is coming, Sweet! Surely coming, Sweet! Sweet! Sweet!"

### XIII. — HOW THE PLANT GREW

“ From each little seed, O hear the cry,  
‘ Who cares to live, to live must die !’  
From each little plant O hear the shout,  
‘ The sunshine is coming, spring out ! spring out !  
For howsoe’er strongly the wind may blow,  
The summer is coming again, we know.’ ”

*From the Norwegian.*



It was Friday when the beans were planted. On Monday one seed was taken carefully from the earth. The little stem had moved down into the soil. “ The baby is awake now and stretching,” said Miss Merriam.

“ You just ought to see how *our* baby stretches,” said Frida.

On Wednesday they looked at another bean. The stem had grown longer. What do you think it had growing out from each side ?

On Friday the little leaves had grown above the cradle-top up to the surface of the earth. They were no longer white but a pale green. What had changed the color ?

The next Monday the plant was several inches high. The two halves of its cradle still clung to the stem. The leaves were larger, and between them was another leaf-bud.

"Do you know now what said 'Wake up' to the plant-baby?" asked Miss Merriam.

"The *light* wakes *me* up in the morning," said Alice.

"So the sunshine and the water both helped the little plant. It was sound asleep in its warm, dark cradle. But the sunshine thrust its slender golden fingers down through the soil. The kind, silver raindrops ran hurrying down to where the cradle lay.

"'Wake up, dear little one,' they said, 'the beautiful growing time is coming.'

"So the baby stirred and stretched. His cradle was too small for the new life. Down went the plump foot firmly in the soil.

"Up came two little leaves like clasped hands. 'Dear light; be good to me,' was their prayer, 'show me the way to find you.'

"'I am all right,' said the stem, 'my place is to stay in the dark, to reach about and find sweet juices for the plant-baby's food.

"You may turn me up to the light if you will, but I know my duty, and I shall grow down again even if I must curve to do it.'"

"You talk just as if you had been a plant-baby yourself," said Bessie.

"I have been a human baby, and have watched many human babies," replied Miss Merriam. "When you are older, you will know that there is not so much difference between the various kinds of babies as we have thought."

One day the children could not find the halves of the cradle. "They were on the stem yesterday," said Susie.

"Had they changed at all?"

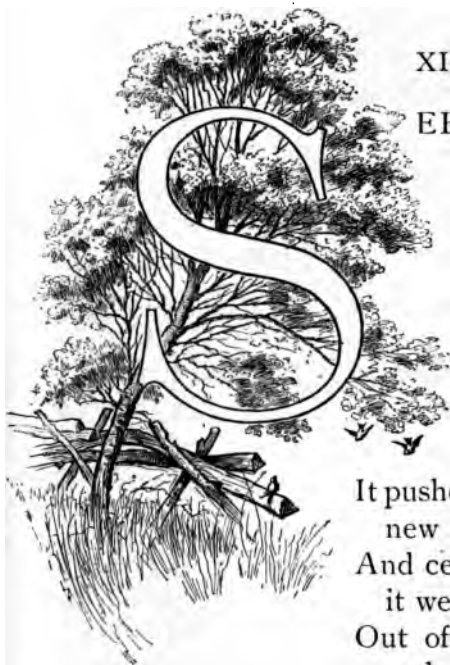
"They looked dry and wrinkled."

"Then they have dropped off. The plant needs them no longer. It now has enough leaves to feed it. They take in what is needed from the air and sunshine. The roots do their work also. Our plant-baby has grown up and can care for itself."

The plants in the boxes grew very fast. They ran up some strings along the side of the window. Pretty soon some white blossoms opened their lovely eyes to the sunny world.

"All this from a *seed*?" you ask.

Yes, this is a part of the life-history of every little seed allowed to grow. In the sweetest, most perfect way, the seed does just what God tells it to do.



#### XIV. — A SEED

SEE how a seed which  
Autumn flung down,  
And through the Win-  
ter neglected lay,  
Uncoils two little green  
leaves and two brown,  
With tiny root taking  
hold on the clay,  
As lifting and strength-  
ening day by day,  
It pushes red branchlets, sprouts  
new leaves,  
And cell after cell the power in  
it weaves,  
Out of the storehouse of soil  
and clime,

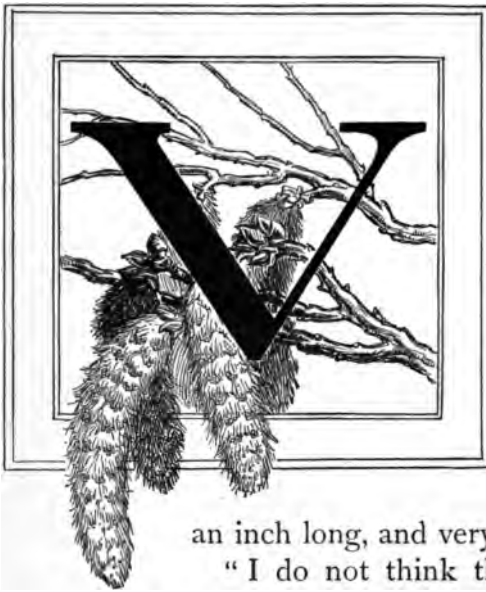
To fashion a tree in due course of time ;  
Tree with rough bark, and bough's expansion,  
Where the crow can build his mansion,  
Or a man in some new May,  
Lie under whispering leaves and say,  
' Are the ills of one's life so very bad  
When a Green Tree makes me deliciously glad ? '  
As I do now. But where shall I be  
When this little tree is a tall green tree ?

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM.

## XV. — THE CATKIN

"For ages on our river borders,  
These tassels in their tawny bloom,  
And willowy studs of downy silver,  
Have prophesied of Spring to come."

JOHN G. WHITTIER.



ERY soon after  
Pussy Willow  
came the Cat-  
kin was seen on  
the alder and  
hazel bushes.

There were  
some catkins  
on a branch in  
the schoolroom.  
Beth Fairchild  
had brought  
them. They  
were about half

an inch long, and very hard.

"I do not think them pretty," said  
the little girl.

"Wait and see," replied Miss Merriam, putting  
the branch in water.

The sunshine coaxed the catkin. "Do grow  
and show them what you can be," urged the warm  
rays.

"It is pretty hard to fight against public opinion," replied the catkin sadly. "The little girl does not like me — says I am ugly."

"Oh, never mind! Go ahead! She'll change her mind by and by."

So the catkin took heart. Every day he stretched a little.

"Why, he is growing longer," cried the children.

The catkin grew and grew. You never saw such a big fellow; he simply outdid himself. What do you think he began to send out after a while? Mary Ann's pink nose was covered with it one day. She was asleep on the window seat in the sunshine.

"What is the yellow dust?" asked Frida.

"It is pollen; it ripens the seeds of other flowers. Have you never seen it before?"

Many of the children had.

The catkin still grew. It grew as if it were fun.

One day Miss Merriam let the children look at it through a magnifying glass. Every little bit was in itself a lovely flower.

"The catkin *is* beautiful, after all," said Beth.

"Well, it paid to try," thought the catkin, tired with stretching.

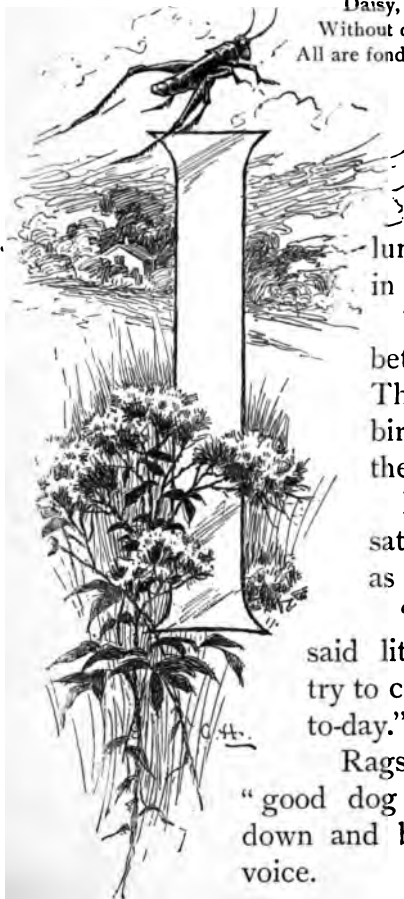
"There! did n't I tell you so?" said the jolly sunbeam.



## XVI. — WHAT RAGS FOUND

"The grasshoppers all skip,  
The early dewdrops sipping,  
Under, over,  
Bent and clover,  
Daisy, sorrel  
Without quarrel,  
All are fond of skipping."

THOMAS HOOD.



T was recess at the brown schoolhouse. The children had eaten their luncheon, and were at play in the field opposite.

They liked this field even better than the schoolyard. They liked to swing on the birches and to sail boats on the brook.

Rags was there, too. He sat on the schoolhouse steps as the children came out.

"Is n't he a good dog?" said little Dolly. "He did n't try to come into the schoolhouse to-day."

Rags was *so* happy to be called "good dog"! He jumped up and down and barked at the top of his voice.

When they reached the field Rags ran about the edge, still barking loudly.

"He does that to keep all the bad dogs away," explained Alice.

"I'd like to see any bad dogs here," barked Rags. "If they come I'll send them off, double-quick time! Wow!"

The children walked about, looking carefully to see if the first violets had arrived. March had thus far been mild and lovely. The grass was already green. But the violet-sisters had not as yet donned their green coats and blue bonnets.

"What is the matter with Rags?" said Rose. "He has found something."

Rags, almost beside himself, was standing looking down into the grass.

"I have a hopping thing," barked Rags. "It hopped up in my face! I caught it with my paw! I am holding it down for *you*, my dear master."

"It's a young grasshopper!" cried Tom. "I'll take it to Miss Merriam."

"Here's another!" said Bob. "Hi! there he goes. Oh dear, I lost him!"

"I have one," said Frida. "Let's each try to get one."

So down on their knees went the children, Rags meantime telling them how to catch the "hopping things."

"I caught the first," he barked, "so I know. Get down on all fours just as I do. Put your front paw down — so! Quick!"

The children caught three or four more, then ran to find Miss Merriam.

"Grasshoppers! live grasshoppers," they cried, tumbling into the schoolroom.

"What! as early as this?" said their teacher.

"Truly! truly! just see!" and Tom opened his hands a little way.

"You are right," said Miss Merriam. "I never saw them so early before. Put them in this glass."

The young grasshoppers soon found themselves in a glass house. It was useless to try to fly out, for Miss Merriam had tied netting over the top.

"I know we'll have a lesson about the grasshoppers," said Tom to Alice as the bell rang.

Mary Ann was watching a mouse-hole in the cellar, so Rags was allowed to come in. He felt very proud of the honor, and tried not to bark every time a grasshopper stirred.

XVII. — ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND  
CRICKET

THE poetry of earth is never dead !  
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead ;  
This is the Grasshopper's, — he takes the lead  
In summer luxury, — he has never done  
With his delights : for when tired out with fun  
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.  
The poetry of earth is ceasing never :  
On a lone winter evening, when the frost  
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills  
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever ;  
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost  
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

JOHN KEATS.

## XVIII. — GRASSHOPPER GREEN

"Grasshopper Green is a comical chap,  
He lives on the best of fare ;  
Bright little jacket and trousers and cap,  
These are his summer wear.

" Out in the meadow he loves to go  
Playing away in the sun,  
It 's hopperty, skipperty high and low,  
Summer 's the time for fun."

THIS IS THE STORY GRASSHOPPER GREEN TOLD.



I AM a young grasshopper.

I am a very early one.

Do you know what I came  
from?

What does the chicken  
come from?

Look at my head! Is n't  
it funny?

It is so queer I am really  
quite proud of it. It is what  
I call beautiful. I cannot  
say that of your heads.

See my eyes! Why do  
you like them? Are they  
like yours? Why not?

If my eyes were set in like  
yours, I should feel very  
badly.

See my feelers! Where are they?

They will be very long, by and by. Then I shall be the envy of all my friends.

What did you say about *wings*? You show how little you know. It really makes me sad!

No grasshopper has wings when he is first born.

I have more legs than you. Count them and tell me how many pairs. My legs have joints.

Look at my back legs.

They grow from my thighs. Are they long or short?

Let me just kick a bit to show you how strong they are. There! can *you* kick up over your body like *that*?

My body is made up of rings. Look at its end! What color am I?

Soon I am going to jump out of my skin. Can you do that?

My old skin will be too small for me. I need a new one as you need new clothes.

I don't quite like this place. I hope that kind lady will let me out by and by.

Please tie up that dog. Dogs and cats are sworn foes of grasshoppers.

Good-by. I want to hop now.

## XIX. — ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET

**G**REEN little vaulter in the sunny grass,  
Catching your heart up at the feel of June —  
Sole voice that 's heard amidst the lazy noon  
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass ;  
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class  
With those who think the candles come too soon,  
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune  
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass.  
O sweet and tiny cousins that belong,  
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,  
Both have your sunshine ; both, though small, are strong  
At your clear hearts ; and both seem given to earth  
To ring in thoughtful ears this natural song, —  
In doors and out, summer and winter, — Mirth.

LEIGH HUNT.

## XX. — AN EARLY VISITOR

"The bluebird shifting his light load of song."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

ONE bright day in the last of March, Miss Merriam took her school for a walk. They left the road behind and went into a field.

Everywhere from the dead brown grass the new green blades were pushing up.

On the branches of the apple-trees funny little gray woolly buds were swelling. They were like mittens covering the dainty pink fingers of my Lady Appletree.

The sky was a deep blue, with white baby cloudlets floating over it. The air was warm and sunny, for lovely Spring had really come.

The children ran around until they were tired. Then they clustered about Miss Merriam, who sat on a great rock.

She was showing them some queer green and gray wrinkled patches. They clung to the rock so tightly that it was hard to get them off without tearing.

"Hush!" said Miss Merriam. "Keep very still."

Just then a sweet song came from overhead, and they saw a flash of blue wings. It was the first bluebird.



Over the bare fields soared the lovely stranger. They could see his brown breast and the patch of white next to the tail. His wings and back were bluer than the bluest sky.

His song trickled down to them like drops of silver. Close behind came his mate. Four blue



wings dipping and flashing! Two brown breasts rising and falling! They went to an old apple-tree.

“Is this a good place, dearie-o, dearie-o?” said Mr. Bluebird.

“Nice tree! nice tree!” piped Mrs. Bluebird’s silver voice.

The children shouted; they could keep still no longer. Up and away flashed the blue wings!

"Dear, dear, dearie-o!" came the sweet notes, growing fainter and fainter.

"I wish we could have kept still longer," said Tom.

"I think you did very well as it was," said Miss Merriam. "It would be hard even for grown people to keep still with such a lovely sight before them."

"We must put that down in our spring notebooks," said Paul.

"I hope you will be so gentle and kind that the bluebirds will build in this field. They like old apple-trees, but they are very shy. It is easy to drive them away if we are rough and too noisy."

"I feel so happy 'cause the birdies have come," said Dolly.

"Let's all take hold of hands and dance," proposed Frida.

So they made a ring, and danced about Miss Merriam. It was a pretty sight: thirty little children dancing under the spring skies.

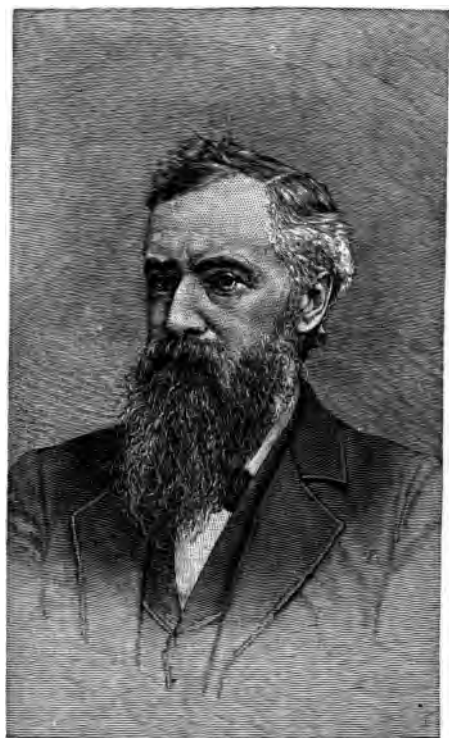
The warm sun shone down on rosy cheeks, laughing eyes, and bright curls; on fluttering ribbons and pretty white aprons. Then they broke the ring and ran to Miss Merriam.

Poor Miss Merriam! she got so many "bear hugs," so many warm childish kisses!

Mr. and Mrs. Bluebird were resting at the lower end of the field.

"How pretty that school looked!" said Mrs. Bluebird. "I almost wish we had not flown away. I was not so *very* much afraid."

"My parents built in this field last year," said Mr. Bluebird. "It was a good place. The children were kind and gentle. Perhaps we could not do better."



*John Quincy Adams*



## XXI. — BIRD OF THE EARTH-BROWN BREAST

"And wiled the bluebird to his whiff of song."

LOWELL.

WHEN Nature made the bluebird she wished to make the sky and earth friends. So she gave him the color of the one on his back, and the hue of the other on his breast. She ordered that his appearance in spring should tell that the strife and war between earth and sky was at an end.

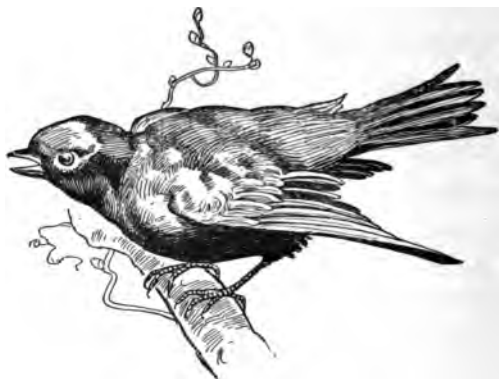
He is the peace bringer ; in him the earth and sky shake hands and are fast friends. He means the furrow and the warmth ; he means all the soft, wooing influences of the spring on the one hand, and the retreating footsteps of winter on the other.

. . . . .  
In New York and in New England the sap starts up in the sugar-maple the very day the bluebird arrives, and sugar-making begins forthwith. . . .

The bluebird is the first bit of color that cheers our northern landscape. The other birds that arrive about the same time — the sparrow, the robin, the phœbe bird, are clad in neutral tints,

gray, brown, or russet; but the bluebird brings one of the primary hues, and the divinest of them all. . . .

The bluebird usually builds its nest in a hole in a stump or stub, or in an old cavity dug out by a woodpecker, when such can be had; but its first impulse seems to be to start in the world in much



more style, and the happy pair make a great show of house hunting, about the farm buildings. Now they think they will take a dove-cot, then they will discuss a last year's swallow's-nest.

We hear them announce with much flourish and flutter that they have taken the wren's house, or the tenement of the purple martin.

Finally nature becomes too urgent, when all this pretty make-believe ceases. Most of them settle back upon the old family stumps and knot-holes in remote fields and go to work in earnest.

. . . . .

With the bluebirds the male is useful as well as ornamental. He is the gay champion and escort of the female at all times. While she is sitting he feeds her regularly.

It is very pretty to watch them building a nest. The male is very active in hunting out a place and exploring the boxes and cavities. He seems to have no choice in the matter, and is anxious only to please and encourage his mate—who knows what will do and what will not.

After she has suited herself, away the two go in search of material for the nest. The male acts as guard, flying ahead and above the female.

She brings all the material and does all the work of building. He looks on and encourages her with gesture and song.

She enters the nest with her bit of dry grass or straw, and having placed it to her notion, withdraws and waits near by while he goes in and looks it over. On coming out he exclaims very plainly, "Excellent! excellent!" and away the two go again for more material.

*Adapted from* JOHN BURROUGHS.



## XXII. — A RACE WITH THE WIND

"Oh wind! a-blowing all day long,  
Oh wind, that sings so loud a song!"

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

THE cuckoo clock sang its cheery note at half-past nine, and Alice rose from her piano like a free little bird. She put on her rubbers and light coat, and pulled the red Tam o' Shanter over the brown hair.

North Wind was humming around the corner of the house.

"Dear me! Alice has on her cap to-day. I should have had such fun tipping that felt sailor over her nose!" and North Wind gave a funny groan.

Tom was on the lookout for his friend.

"Is n't this a jolly day!" he cried. "I feel like running. Let's race with the wind."

"All right," said North Wind, "nothing I like better! Come on!"

Down the road ran the children, the jolly wind roaring with joy. First, he took them by a grove of oak-trees.

"Tune up!" he cried merrily, blowing through the branches until every dry leaf sighed.

"What a sad noise they make!" said Alice.

"They are the stiffest set," hummed North Wind. "They hang on all winter! They don't know enough to drop like other leaves. But your time will come soon — soon — s-o-o-n! You'll go — go — g-o-o-o!"

The next moment North Wind went whisking



over the meadows. Tom and Alice scrambled through the bars.

"Wait!" cried the alder and birch catkins; "come and see how we are stretching."

"I have put out my rosy-purple silken threads," said the hazel.

"Listen to our sad story," sighed the water-reeds. "Once a god lay by us. He breathed

through us a wild, sweet song. He went away and left us lonely and we have forgotten the song. That is why we must sigh — sigh — forever.”

Up among the pines went North Wind. How he bent the great branches! How he roared and hummed through the slender needles!

“It is like the ocean — I love it,” said Alice, stopping to listen.

“Yes, the sea, the sea! the wide beautiful sea; we long for the sea! We dream of it by night, we sing of it by day. When shall we find it?” murmured the pines sadly.

“Come on! come on!” called the North Wind.

They ran down the hill and up another where two windmills stood. The school-children called them the General and the Captain. The General pumped water up into the Club House. The Captain did the same for Frida’s home.

“I wonder why the Captain cries so?” said Tom, stopping short.

“Do you ask?” whined the Captain. “Am I not smaller than my neighbor? Does he not belong to a club house, and I to a private residence only?”

“But you have a sweet little girl to love you,” said the General kindly.

“Come *on*!” called North Wind.

“I can’t help it! You *know* you look down on me,” replied the Captain bitterly.

“Come *on*! I can’t *wait*!”

But Alice and Tom were looking for snail shells under the chestnut leaves.

"I'll go to Greenland and pull every little polar bear's tail until he fairly howls!" said North Wind crossly, and away he flew.

"Why, Tom, where's the Wind?" said Alice a moment later.

"I think he got tired waiting, and ran away from us," said Tom laughingly.

### XXIII. — THE WHISTLER

HE came up over the hill  
In the flush of the early morn,  
And he blew his whistle shrill,  
Till the blackbirds, down in the corn,  
And the robins, all were still.

And the leaves began to lean,  
And the little blades of grass,  
And the lily garden queen  
All eager to see him pass, —  
He of the frolic mien.

They watched for his black-tossed hair,  
And his peachy lips a-purse,  
And his tan cheeks full and fair,  
As he flung a flute-like verse  
Into every nook of the air.


But never a trace could they find  
Of his form, though they knew him near ;  
And their bright eyes were not blind.  
You will marvel not to hear  
That the whistler was the wind.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

## XXIV. — FAR IN THE WOODS

"When beechen buds begin to swell,  
And woods the bluebird's warble know,  
The yellow violet's modest bell  
Peeps from the last year's leaves below."

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.



**I**T was a happy little party that met at the Big Oak one May afternoon. Miss Merriam, Alice, Tom, and Mollie Dawson were going to hunt for yellow violets.

Of course Rags went, and when Frisk Dawson saw his friend, he simply lifted up his voice and rent the air with his cries.

"I should like to know if *I* am to be left out?" he demanded. The little dogs were crazy with delight. They raced down the road barking wildly.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Chipmunk to her husband, "I wish dogs had never been invented. They do make me nervous with their loud voices."

"Come down here, madam," grinned Rags; "a little shaking would improve your temper."

Mr. Chipmunk dropped an old nut on Rags's head.

"Come up *here*, my friend," he said; "let us settle the matter in the right place,—in the boughs of this old chestnut."

Rags trotted on, pretending not to hear. It cut the little dog's heart to remember that he could not climb a tree.

It was lovely in the woods. The young ferns were unrolling their curl papers. They were such funny, pinky, damp, rumpled things! The children gathered a few and wrapped them in wet moss.

The maple twigs were tipped with red, and in some places the path was rosy with the fallen blossoms.

Through the faintly budding branches the great, purple shoulders of the hills lifted themselves against the spring sky. The sunshine stole down pleasantly, and far away bird-voices were calling.

"I do love to be in the woods," said Alice dreamily, looking up through the tracery of gray-*green*.

"So do I," said Mollie. "I always feel *good* in the woods. Oh, Alice, let's say 'Far in the Woods.'"

"Far in the woods, the fresh green woods, in May,  
Once sang a bird; but all it found to say,  
Was, 'Keep it! keep it!' all the merry day.

"The bird? I never saw it, no, not I;  
I followed, but it flitted far on high;  
And 'Keep it! keep it!' Echo caught the cry.

"I was so glad as through the woods I went!  
And now I think that 'Keep it! keep it!' meant,  
'Child, keep each happy thought that Heaven has sent.'"

EDITH M. THOMAS.

"Why, what is *that*?" cried Tom. Faint and far down the forest aisles came a sweet, coaxing voice: "Keep it!"

Mollie looked at Alice and the color deepened in their cheeks.

"Keep it! keep it!" Nearer came the song.

"Keep it! keep it! *keep* it!" nearer and faster.

Tom squeezed Miss Merriam's hand, but no one spoke.

"*Keep it—keep it—k-e-e-p it!*" It was directly overhead, but they could not see the singer's form.

"Keep it — keep it — *k-e-e-p it!*"

Away floated the song until it died in one delicate note in the distance. The children drew a long breath.

"Miss Merriam," said Tom solemnly, "we have truly heard the 'keep it' bird!"



"And here are the yellow violets," exclaimed Alice joyously.

They were springing beside the path, — the tall stems with their great light-green, net-veined leaves.

"Oh, see the darling, cuddling flower!" cried Alice, turning up the drooping golden face of the violet.

"See the black lines on its throat!" said Tom. "I'm so glad we came."

"Really, boys and girls are past finding out," said Rags. "What a fuss they make over a flower! Now, if it were a fine, large rat, how proudly would I lay such at my dear master's feet!"

"I agree with you," replied Frisk. "A good-sized *bone* is a thing of joy forever."

"But we must not tell where the yellow violets are," went on Rags; "let us prove that we, too, can keep a secret. Why, even that saucy bird said, 'Keep it! keep it!'"

## XXV. — MARY'S MEADOW

"A pasture rolling west  
Lies open to the sun,  
Bright shod with primroses doth it run ;  
And forty oaks be nigh,  
Apart and face to face,  
And cowbells all the morn  
In the space."

*From "A Ballad of Kenelm."*

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY.



**W**HAT red cheeks,  
my Dolly!" said  
Miss Merriam.

"I tried so hard  
to make good *g's*,"  
replied the dear lit-  
tle thing.

"They *are* good, Dolly."

A smile of joy rippled  
over the small face.

"My children have all done  
well. I am *very* happy."

Such a company of twin-  
kling smiles dancing over cheeks and lips!

"You have done so well I will take you to  
'Mary's Meadow' at recess."

"Oh-h-h!" squealed twelve little voices.

It was not far to "Mary's Meadow." They

went down Maple Road until the brook cut across their path.

"Hear the water sing!" said Miss Merriam, as they stood on the bridge. "Listen! is it not a sweet little song? What does it say?"

The children smiled, but no one answered.

"I think it says, 'Ripple-dipple-bubble-ubble-chink-chink!'"

"It does, I hear it!" cried Owen.

"Look, children, Mr. Sparrow is going to take a drink."

A small brown bird was standing on a stone, looking about with his bright dark eyes. At last he plunged his head down into the water and splashed it up over his back.

"He's having a bath!" squealed the small voices.

Birdie was frightened and flew away, although Constance called after him, "Come back, birdie! Do come back!"

"Never mind, children! See where the forget-me-nots are coming up under the great willows."

"I don't see the 'darling eyes of blue,'" said Isabel.

"Oh, it's not time yet: only the leaves are up. By and by we shall see the sweet little blue eyes."

"I will get you a whole bushel, Miss Merriam, when they come," said Owen eagerly.

"I'll get you the *whole world full!*" cried Donald, not to be outdone.

"Thank you, my dear children. Now we must go on."

At the bars the children wriggled through like so many kittens. Some rolled under, Miss Merriam laughing to see them.

"Look, children! see what I've found."

It was a patch of ground crowded full with tiny blossoms. Each stood up bravely, on its yellow, thread-like stem. Each one had a yellow centre with four bluish-white points or petals about it.

"These are eyebrights cuddled together. They like to grow that way."

"It's like a school of children," said Bessie.

They found half a dozen patches, one, only, as large as a handkerchief. Close to the ground were short-stemmed violets, blue as the sky, peeping out from their broad green leaves.

Hal found a wee, yellow flower with five petals. "Is it a baby buttercup?" he inquired.

"No, it is a cinquefoil," replied Miss Merriam.

"I'm 'fraid I sha'n't 'member that," said Hal, shaking his sunny locks.

Just then Isabel called them to see a rock, with tiny white flowers growing from its crevices. Each had a golden heart and a fuzzy red stem.

"That is 'saxifrage,'" explained Miss Merriam. "Oh Donald, what have you?"

"I found it in some bushes near the wall," Donald replied proudly; "it is a Mayflower."

"What a long stem!"

"See how it bends over!"

"It has one pink cheek."

"It's like a fairy bell."

"We call it 'anemone' or 'windflower.' Now, children, we must go. Do you see the eyebrights I have taken up on this piece of turf? We will water them every day, and they will keep a long time for us."

Just then Hal spied a big turtle. "Can't we carry him to school and *tame* him?" he inquired.

"I'm afraid he would be homesick, dear."

Hal looked so unhappy that Miss Merriam added quickly:

"You may keep him, if you'll let him go after school."

So Hal ran along, clasping his treasure. But in a moment Mr. Turtle snapped him sharply. Hal let him drop with a cry.

"His *toenails* are too sharp," he sobbed, the tears rolling down his face.

"Never mind, dear boy. *You* would n't like it if a big giant should try to carry you away, would you?"

"It's lovely in 'Mary's Meadow.' May we come again to-morrow?"

"We will come again soon, my little children."

## XXVI. — A BIRTHDAY GIRL

“And all voices that address her  
Softened, sleecken every word,  
As if speaking to a bird.

“And all fancies yearn to cover  
The hard earth whereon she passes,  
With the thymy-scented grasses.

“And all hearts do pray, ‘God love her!’  
Ay, and always, in good sooth,  
We may all be sure he doth.”

E. B. BROWNING.



I

“GOOD morning, Alice,” said  
the sun, peeping through  
the windows.

“Good morning,” mewed  
Prettytoes, with a wet, lov-  
ing kiss.

“Good morning, my dear  
child,” said mother, com-  
ing to greet her Birthday Girl.

Eight golden daffodils in a pale-  
green glass nodded at Alice’s plate.  
On the right lay a new book, with  
“In Sunshine Land” on the cover.

A fine bicycle leaned against her chair. Do you wonder that Alice was too happy to eat?

"Did you like my present?" was Tom's first question, as they started for school. "I bought it with my own money."

"How good you are, Tom!" said Alice gratefully. "I *love* the 'Sunshine' book."

"Come, my dear Birthday Girl," said Miss Merriam at school, holding out a pink, sweet spray. "Let me pin this on. Here's one for you, Tom."

Then Alice saw that every pupil wore arbutus. What a glad throb of joy came as the children sang! —

"Oh, a happy new year to our little friend,  
Our little friend so dear."

Alice, as queen of the day, chose the songs, games, and verses. She also gave out books, pencils, and papers.

The time passed quickly and happily.

At three o'clock eighteen children met Miss Merriam at the Great Oak. They were to walk to the Glen, and on their return take tea with Alice.

Roy brought his bugle and some of the other boys their bows and arrows. They had been reading "Robin Hood," and liked playing at archers in the "merry greenwood."

"I hope they won't shoot the birdies," whispered troubled little Frida to Miss Merriam.

"They are not likely to hit anything," said her friend, comfortingly.

After a half-mile walk among the pines, an old quarry was reached. Leaping down from stair to stair in the ledges came a little brook, child of the spring rains.

Miss Merriam let them throw stones in the pools that had formed in the hollows of the rocks. Polly-Pod or Horace Burt slipped in, and wet one leg half way to the knee.

"I don't care," said Polly-Pod stoutly, "I *like* to be wet."

"Be ponies," said Miss Merriam, "that will help it dry."

So the frisky children pranced along the pine-needles, and some even got down and rolled.

Suddenly the trees ended, and they were in a lonely little glen folded about by the hills. To the right rose the bold shoulder of Hancock Hill, outlined in dark blue. It quite overhung them, and the children were awed by its wild, savage beauty.

In the bright, green meadow where they stood a little brook ran, — a famous trout stream. The children raced away to look in the laughing waters. Shouts of joy soon told that the first pink spires of the arethusa had been found.

Mr. Rolf, the one dweller in the Glen, came to meet them. His kind face grew very bright as Alice danced forward.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Rolf," said the little



maid. "It's my birthday, — I'm eight! That's why we're here. Oh! how is Sweetlips?"

"I am very glad to see you, Miss Alice," said Mr. Rolf, lifting his hat. "Sweetlips will be glad, too. She is feeding below the house — and with something to show you."

"Miss Merriam — children — all come!" cried Alice. "Sweetlips has something to show us. I know — I know!"

Away fled the children to find Sweetlips. In front of the house was tied a pretty red and white cow, and close to her stood a funny little calf.

## II

"A bossy! a bossy!" exclaimed the children. "What long legs! What a queer bossy!"

The baby cow looked very much disturbed, and began to prance on her long, unsteady legs.

"Gently! gently!" warned Miss Merriam. "See how the poor baby trembles, she is so afraid."

The children patted Sweetlips, and the friendly creature stood and looked at them with her large, kind eyes.

"That bossy has a red bonnet and cape on," said Mollie.

Every one shouted. But the baby was indeed strangely marked.

"Perhaps you would like to name the calf," said Mr. Rolf to Alice.

"Oh! thank you! I think Tippytoes would be a good name."

"So it shall be," said Mr. Rolf heartily.

Just then Roy blew a tremendous blast on his bugle. Poor Tippytoes kicked up her heels in a fright, and started across the field.

"We are making poor Sweetlips and her baby very unhappy," said Miss Merriam. "Let us go away to Apple-Tree House."

In the orchard were some charming old trees, just right to climb. They had low branches and broad limbs, and were full of delightful nooks and corners.

The children scrambled up to their pet places in a twinkling, Miss Merriam with them. They told stories, laughed and sang, until Mr. Rolf thought the air full of little birds.

By and by they slid down and ran to get a drink from the old well, with its long sweep. They walked on the fence, which was, as Daisy said, "such a nice, *safe* fence to walk on!"

They peeped at the speckled hens and the sober old horse. They rolled down the grassy slope, and then picked violets and buttercups to adorn their hats. Then Mr. Rolf invited them in to see his cases of butterflies and moths.

After this the boys found four kittens in the shed, and poor Miss Merriam had hard work to collect her flock. At last they were in the woods once more on their homeward way.

"It's raining," said Percy suddenly.

The sky had grown dark, and big drops pattered down.

"Come in under the hemlocks," said Miss Merriam.

The children crept under the low, spreading boughs which closed like a roof above them. They could hear the patter of the drops overhead, — the click and fall of the elfin hoofs of the rain steeds, — but not a drop came through.

The little ants foraging among the pine and hemlock needles were very much surprised at these newcomers. A bird whose nest was down low brooded her treasures with a trembling heart.

But the rain soon ceased and the sun shone out again. The children crept from their hiding-places to see a glorious rainbow shining through the trees.

At Alice's home, Mrs. Pryor met and welcomed them at the door. After hands and faces had been washed, and tumbled locks smoothed, they were called to the dining-room.

Oh the joys of that feast! They had birthday cake, sandwiches, and wee biscuits; tarts, animal crackers, ice-cream, lemon jelly, and glasses of milk and cocoa. A horn of candy at each plate completed this dainty supper.

At last Alice was alone in her own room. Sounds of music came stealing from the garden.

Some one was playing a guitar and singing these words : —

Good-night, my sweet !  
Rest, tired feet.  
The shadows creep,  
The wee stars peep ;  
The moon looks from a cloudlet fold.  
Sleep, little girl with the heart of gold,  
Good-night !

The south wind sighs,  
Close, weary eyes !  
In cosy nest  
Find sweetest rest ;  
Sleep till the night grows wan and old ;  
Greet the young day, Heart of Gold.  
Good-night !

“ Dear Uncle Phil ! he always thinks of such nice things,” mused Alice. “ I ’m so happy — and — sleepy. Can I keep awake until mother comes ? I ” —

The moonbeams stole into the little white room and kissed the quiet form. Down the garden walk tinkled the music, growing fainter and fainter.

“ Good-night ! ” breathed the last sweet note.

## XXVII. — BLOSSOMING TIME

"Blow, winds! and waft through all the rooms  
The snowflakes of the cherry-blooms!  
Blow, winds! and bend within my reach  
The fiery blossoms of the peach!"

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.



### I

FEEL so good to-day," said Alice, skipping up and down until every stray lock bobbed.

"I feel — just common," remarked Tom, taking careful aim at a big robin gravely promenading on Mr. Ellis's lawn.

"Don't, Tom!" cried the little girl sharply.

Tom's hand dropped, and a flush crept over his brown face.

"How *can* you do so, when you say you love the birds?"

"I *do* like the birds, and I *don't* want to hurt them," said Tom stoutly.

"Why, Tom Bennett! you were all ready to throw that stone."

"Well, I didn't think. I don't know *why* it is," said Tom dolefully, "but the minute you see something alive, your hand wants to hit it before you know what you are about. Truly and honestly, Alice, if you were a boy you would know just how it is."

"Yes," barked Rags, "if you were a boy or a dog, you would understand just what Tom and I mean."

Alice held her head a trifle higher.

"I'm afraid, Tom," she said at last, coldly, "that you are getting to be just like some other boys."

"Well, I don't want to be like a girl," muttered Tom crossly; "boys are as good as girls any day."

"Dear me!" said a cheery voice; "my Alice and Tom are surely not quarreling?"

Miss Merriam looked down upon her two sulky children with amused eyes.

"I didn't like what Tom did," said Alice slowly.

"Alice thought I was mean," mumbled Tom.

"Tell me about it," said their teacher coaxingly.

"Yes, do explain," begged Rags; "Miss Merriam is all that we dogs admire. Her lap is a cosy nest for an after-dinner nap, and I have never found a spot more convenient for extra bones than her largest pansy-bed."

"Often have I dined royally from her own table. The rugs in her parlor are ideal napkins, I assure you. She is a good companion on a walk, and we entirely agree on the subject of gray squirrels and muskrats. Oh, no, do not shame this dear and admirable Miss Merriam."

"You must excuse Tom," said Miss Merriam after she had heard the recital. "Is he not at heart a good, kind boy? We all do wrong things for lack of thought. Come, Alice, have you never acted hastily yourself?"

Tom walked along, winking hard to keep the tears back. Alice stole a little glance at him and her heart melted.

"You are not mean, Tom," she said quickly. "I'm sorry I said so. You're the nicest, kindest boy I know."

"That is right," barked Rags joyfully. "Had you not forgiven my master, much as I love you, my dearest Alice, I should have been *compelled* to turn my back upon you."

"Now let us talk of pleasanter subjects," said Miss Merriam. "Colonel Appleton has invited the grammar classes and your division to see his orchard in bloom."

"Oh, hurrah!" cried Tom.

"I'm so glad!" said Alice. "Colonel Appleton's parties are the very nicest things that happen in this town."

"Alice, I'll race you to the schoolhouse gate.

Please excuse us, Miss Merriam, but we can't keep still with such a treat ahead."

"Run along, dears," said Miss Merriam in ready sympathy.

The two skipped away, and Rags followed in joyful excitement. His dog-heart realized that the cloud had passed.

## II

The children found great branches of flowering fruit trees in their various school-rooms. They drew or painted them, and each grade had its selected nature-lesson from these same beautiful subjects.

Just before school closed, Mr. Minot called them together and showed a collection of colored Japanese photographs. They were views of cherry or peach orchards with the happy, child-like people enjoying themselves under the branches.

At three the children came together again for their walk to Colonel Appleton's. At the gate of the orchard they paused a moment, and looked at the great trees, white and rosy with bloom, which towered above the hedge.

The green door opened and Shuji, Colonel Appleton's Japanese servant, appeared in the full costume of his native land. Making a low bow, with hands clasped tightly together, Shuji welcomed them in Japanese, and Colonel Appleton repeated his words in English.



"A thousand welcomes to you. May your joys be as many and as fragrant as these blossoms, only may they not fade so quickly!"

The orchard covered several acres, and was surrounded by a high buckthorn hedge. The grass was a delicate green, studded with lilies of the valley, violets, and dandelions. The peach trees glowed as with fire, and the plum and cherry trees showered down soft, white petals with every wind.

The children stood silent; they had never before realized how much beauty lay in a blossoming orchard. As they stood there, they became aware of a gentle chorus in the branches.

"Hush!" said Mr. Minot; "listen to the singing trees! What do they say, Lesley?"

Lesley Holmes, a bright-faced girl of twelve, stepped forward.

#### THE SINGING TREES

"White are the singing trees,  
And every breath of the breeze  
Scatters a drift of bloom  
And a honey-sweet perfume;  
While above and all around  
Is a gentle murmuring sound.  
In this music so low and sweet  
Labor and pleasure meet;  
Every small minstrel goes home  
And adds to the great yellow comb,  
Stored for the mid-winter feast,  
When the gift of the flowers has ceased.  
Hark to the singing trees,  
So full of blossoms and bees."

EDITH M. THOMAS.

Just then three dear little Japanese maidens advanced, one in bright rose and silver, one in blue and gold, and the third in primrose-yellow and green.

They were only Ruth, Polly, and Barbara as they had appeared at a party the past winter. But out in the blossoming orchard they seemed like figures from another world.

They sang a little Japanese song that Colonel Appleton had put into English for them. It was about a cherry blossom that loved the south wind only too well; for he blew her petals to the four corners of the earth.

### III

I cannot begin to tell you what pleasure Colonel Appleton's orchard festival gave the children. Their kind friend pointed out the more famous trees, and explained the process of grafting, and how different varieties of fruit could be obtained.

He also explained how trees became wild, and how wild trees could be improved. He told them how to care for the trees and keep them free from insects.

Then he led them to an open space where rows of beehives stood. They saw the little brown-jacketed workers fly home heavy with nectar from the apple blossoms, and with pollen on breast and thighs.

Then they looked at a collection of large pho-

tographs in the library. Colonel Appleton was a great lover of trees, and this collection showed many of the famous trees of the world.

There was our own Washington Elm at Cambridge, and the Domesday Oak on the river Wye in old England. There were the gigantic redwood trees in California, and the renowned beeches of Denmark and Burnham.

They saw the magnificent double row of horse-chestnuts in Bushey Park, near Hampton Court Palace, and many an old oak studded with the mistletoe of the Druids.

There were also the trees of the tropics, — great banyans, palms, and ferns, and trees cut in curious shapes which had adorned the gardens of kings.

Then the children were invited to a stone terrace overlooking the hills, where a table was spread and Shuji handed about slices of bread and honey, sponge cake, and glasses of milk and of lemonade. After luncheon, their kind old friend gave each child a delightful little book by John Burroughs, called "Birds and Bees."

"Three cheers for Colonel Appleton and the orchard!" shouted Guy Weld as they parted from their host. And very heartily rang the cheers through the purple twilight.

## XXVIII. — DECORATION DAY

"How sleep the brave who sink to rest,  
By all their country's wishes blest !  
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,  
She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.


"By fairy hands their knell is rung,  
By forms unseen their dirge is sung ;  
There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,  
To bless the turf that wraps their clay ;  
And Freedom shall a while repair  
To dwell a weeping hermit there."

WILLIAM COLLINS.

IT was three o'clock on Decoration Day. Alice, Tom, and Rags had climbed Eagle Hill with Dr. Lester, and sat looking over the wide landscape.

The doctor was a dear old man, with a thin face and delicate form. Alice's mother had told her that in all the long years since the war, he had never known one day without pain. Yet he never complained. He was always full of fun, always laughing and making jokes, always interested in others. The children loved that kind face, with its deep brown eyes and silver locks.

"Well, Tom," said their friend, "what are you going to be when you are a man?"



"I used to think I should be an engineer, I like machinery so much. But now I've almost decided to be a soldier. It's splendid to wear a uniform, and charge on the foe, and help save your country."

"Tom," said Dr. Lester very quietly, "don't get the idea that the only way to serve your country is to enter the army."

"Why, don't you think it's the best thing in the world to be a soldier?"

"And kill and destroy, and lay waste miles and miles of country? Think of all the sorrow, Tom; all the mothers who lose their sons, all the children who cry for their dead fathers."

"Oh, I didn't know you felt *that* way about it," murmured Tom, very much shocked.

"War, dear Tom, is the most awful thing that can befall a country. We should do everything we can to prevent it.

"But sometimes it becomes a God-given duty to fight. It is better to fight than to lose our freedom. That is what the Revolutionary war meant. Honor bids us fight rather than let a great wrong go on.

"But there is one thing to remember, Tom. We are *one* country, always to stand united 'lest divided we fall.' Every true American will protect his country even with his life-blood.

"You may not be asked to do that, Tom, but you may choose even a better way."

"How?" asked the boy's eager, shining eyes.

"You can be the very best and manliest kind of boy. You can strive to do right in your home and school. That is always the beginning. Then, when you go out in the world, you can be fair and kind in your dealings with others.

"If you see a wrong, you can help right it. You can help make better laws, and see that they are carried out. If every one would do thus, we should never need wars to settle disputes."

Alice and Tom long remembered these words.

"I should like to tell you about the colonel of my regiment," continued the doctor. "His name was Robert G. Shaw.

"He was a young man, Tom, and full of the love of life. He was fond of books, pictures, and travel. He loved quiet hours of study, and above all, he valued the time he spent with his friends.

"Now this young man feared and hated war. Yet, when the time came, he was ready for his duty. He did a task that no one else was willing to undertake. He trained a regiment of negroes into soldiers. For the first time, the black man was made a man like other men.

"In his last fight he led his soldiers into the very jaws of death, and he fell with his face to the foe. It was a glorious death! I could never wish you to follow a truer hero than our Colonel Shaw. I knew him from his boyhood,— brave, honest, cheerful, patient, pure, loving."

Just then the distant notes of the band came stealing up from the valley. The soldiers were going home, and as they marched they sang —

“Glory ! glory hallelujah !  
His soul is marching on.”

“Yes,” said the doctor solemnly, “his soul *is* marching on. Children, do you like poetry ? Here is something Lowell wrote for his friend Shaw : —

“Brave, good, and true,  
I see him stand before me now,  
And read again on that young brow,  
Where every hope was new,  
How sweet were life ! Yet, by the mouth firm-set,  
And look made up for Duty’s utmost debt,  
I could divine he knew  
That death within the sulphurous hostile lines :  
Right in the van,  
On the red rampart’s slippery swell,  
With heart that beat a charge, he fell  
Foeward, as fits a man.”

When a year from the next July came, Alice and Tom stood before the memorial to Colonel Shaw on Boston Common. They gazed up in awe at the fine, resolute face with its onward look.

Their eyes filled with tears as they saw the patient, loving black men loyally plodding after. Reverently they laid their flowers on the granite beneath the bronze.

Tom looked up at the noble young face. He remembered his friend’s words, and his heart said, “I will — I will try to be just such a man.”

## XXIX. — CHERRY RIPE

"In the green leaves overhead  
Little lights were burning red ;  
Looking up, it seemed that I  
Saw the stars in fairy sky  
Glistening the leaves among,  
Lanterns by the pixies hung ;  
But I heard a song-bird pipe,  
'Cherry ripe !' and 'Cherry ripe !' "

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.

I



**T**OM came across the floor, blushing, at Miss Merriam's call, while some of the other children looked confused.

It was one of those days when everything was going wrong. It had grown suddenly hot, the air was close and lifeless, and no one was ready for the change.

Miss Merriam felt it herself, and could not blame her restless children. Bessie kept bobbing up and down, mopping her little red face with a very dingy handkerchief.



"I'm so hot," she said piteously, "my clothes stick to me, and I stick to my seat."

Some of the children had made fans, and were using them with energy. Alice had wound her long braids in a knob, secured by her drawing-pencil. Every time the little girl moved, the pencil bobbed.

This pleased Donald so much that he laughed aloud. No one could hear Donald's laugh and be cross. Miss Merriam said it was like a bobolink's voice and a meadow brook's ripple, twisted in one silver skein of song.

And now Tom was standing there, and every one felt a little strange.

"What have you in your mouth, Tom?"

"Cherries," mumbled the lad.

"Let me see them, please."

Tom at once took out a much-chewed and unpleasant-looking little mass. He felt ashamed as he displayed this sorry sight to his teacher's gaze.

"Thank you, Tom; now please put it in the basket. Children, I will leave the room for a moment. While I am gone, Tom may pass the basket. I expect every cherry to be put in there. Call me, Tom, when all the cherries are collected."

Miss Merriam was in the anteroom nearly five minutes when Tom appeared.

"I have every one," he said, while his dark eyes begged mutely for pardon.

The children were very quiet and sober when their teacher returned. Owen was sobbing, for he did not like to give up his cherries.

"Thank you, children," said Miss Merriam in her usual pleasant tones. "Now may I ask why you eat the cherries before they are ripe?"

"We like green things," at last ventured one child.

"Is the hard, bitter fruit, then, better than the soft, juicy cherries we shall have very soon?"

The children looked a little foolish, but were silent.

"I don't see *why* it is," burst out Percy frankly, "but you want the green fruit the minute it is big enough to bite."

"I felt that way when I was very small," said Miss Merriam calmly. "A baby, you know, wants to put everything into its mouth."

"But when we are older we usually get over caring for such things. *You* are old enough now to realize that unripe fruit cannot be safely eaten. It is giving your stomachs a giant's task. This is as unfair as if I should expect my primary children to do high school work. Can you not let unripe fruit alone and have the patience to wait?"

"Please remember this: no unripe fruit is to be brought to school unless I ask for it."

"Now, children dear, let us make the best of this hot day. If we are only busy the time will pass before we know it."

"We will eat our luncheon out of doors, and the last hour you may have your paint-boxes."

The children went to work briskly. No day is too hot to take away the joy a paint-box may bring.

## II

It was as Miss Merriam said. Not many days passed before the cherries were ready to eat. The sun kissed the little globes hanging between the green leaf clusters. It woke to life the sweet juices, and the cherries blushed redder and redder.

One morning Colonel Appleton's Shuji came to school with a great basket of cherries. He also brought a bough loaded with the fruit. Miss Merriam hung this over the blackboard where all could see.

The children's mouths watered; they knew a feast was in store as well as a lesson.

"What makes the cherry?" was the first question.

No one answered until another was asked.

"What makes the apple?"

"The little part that holds the seeds swells bigger and bigger, and that makes the apple," said Mabel.

"It is the same with the cherry. But what becomes of the pretty, rosy dress of the apple blossom?"

"It drops off; the wind carries it away."

"What do you find at one end of an apple?"

"The stem."

"At the other end?"

"You find a hollow—a dimple we called it—and some little dried leaves."

"The dried leaves were a part of the blossom that did not fall off like the petals. Don't you remember we called it the calyx, or little cup?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Merriam; and when we made our clay apples we stuck a clove in at that end."

"Do you find the calyx left in your cherries?"

The children thought not.

"No. The cherry calyx is not so firmly attached as the apple calyx. It soon dries up and falls away. Frida, what can you tell me about your cherry?"

"It has a light green stem about two inches long. The cherries grow in twos and threes."

"It has a curved surface," said Agnes, "but is n't quite a sphere. White cherries bulge out a good deal on two opposite sides."

"The skin is glossy," said Tom. "These cherries are a light red. I've seen them dark red and almost black."

"Can you peel the cherry?"

"Not very well; the pulp would come off with the skin."

"Tell us about the inside, Norman."

"It is soft; we call it pulp. It is full of sweet juice. There is a hard stone inside."

"What is in the stone?"

"There is meat inside. I've cracked the stones open a good many times."

"What is the meat, Amy?"

"It's the seed, isn't it, Miss Merriam?"

"Yes, my dear; the mother tree has provided a safe, warm nest for her little seed-children."

"I don't see how the seed is ever going to get out. It looks as if the mother-tree planned to keep her children hidden."

"It does indeed, Polly; but why does the tree surround this seed with such rich juicy pulp? Does it not say, 'Do eat me and set the stone free'? Then, when the stone lies on the ground and the sun and rain do their will, the plant-baby finds the way out from its dark cradle with the hard walls."

"You may all eat your cherries, and take out the stones carefully. Is there anything interesting about the stone?"

"It has a little ridge running around it."

"See what I have on the end of my watch-chain, children."

"Why, it's a little basket!"

"Yes, and made from a cherry-stone. My grandfather's hired man carved it for me years ago, when I was a child."

"I don't see how he could do it," said Alice in great awe.

"Well, it did take a sharp knife, great patience,

and much skill. What other fruits have a stone in the centre?"

Alice named the plum, Guy the peach, and Hazel the olive.

Miss Merriam asked them in what points these fruits differed from the cherry. Here are some of the questions she put on the blackboard. Can you answer them?

In what is the cherry like the peach and plum?

How does it differ?

How does the cherry-skin differ from the peach-skin?

Why are the plum and cherry skins more nearly alike?

Is there any difference in the pulp of the three?

### III

"How many of you like cherries?"

Every hand was raised.

"I know some one who likes the cherries even better than you do."

"Oh! the robins! the robins!"

"Yes; and of all cherry-eaters I think the robins deserve their share most. Have you any idea how many insects or worms a young robin will eat in a day?"

"Perhaps twenty," ventured Alice.

"I have read of a man who watched a nest from nine in the morning until five at night. The

parents brought over three hundred worms to the little ones in that time."

"If all the birds do as well, I think they earn the few cherries they take," said Guy warmly.

"I think so, too, and they should be more than welcome to their feast. I want to read you this story from John Burroughs:—

"One season, to protect my early cherries, I placed a large stuffed owl amid the branches of a tree. Such a racket as there instantly began about my grounds is not pleasant to think upon. The orioles and robins fairly "shrieked out their affright." The news instantly spread in every direction, and apparently every bird in town came to see that owl in the cherry-tree, so that I lost more fruit than if I had left the owl in-doors.

"With craning necks and horrified looks the birds alighted upon the branches, and between their screams each one would snatch off a cherry, as if the act was some relief to their outraged feelings.'"

"When a young bird falls from its nest, the other birds collect and make a terrible fuss," said Horace Burt. "If you climb up and put the bird back the rest calm down, and soon go away."

"Do you see this great basket of ripe cherries? We will divide them at luncheon. Did n't it pay to wait, Tom?"

"Yes, Miss Merriam," said Tom, with a red face, though his eyes twinkled.

### XXX. — WHITE BIRCH AND WILD RASPBERRIES.

"The birch, most shy and lady-like of trees."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

Alice and Tom were having a vaulting match out on the avenue. Tom was beginning to get cross at his repeated failures, when a jolly voice cried —

"Hi! there!"

Both children turned as Uncle Phil came toward them on his bicycle.

"Oh, Uncle Phil!" screamed Alice, running up to him and catching hold of his arm. "Goody, goody, goody! Have you come to stay all day?"

"Yes, indeed!" gayly replied Mr. Lansing. "I was getting lonesome in Cambridge. I feel like a poor old cow who has been kept on dry hay for months. I long for a bite of fresh growing grass. Now, my chickens, go put up a lunch while I speak to Mary. We'll go on a tramp."

Tom and Alice fled, capering with joy. What could be better than rambling about with the best of uncles on the loveliest of June Saturdays? Tom came back in his oldest sailor suit, Rags at his heels, barking wildly.

"Want to go too, little Rags?" said Uncle



Phil, catching him up. "I'm afraid it is too far for little dogs."

"Oh! wow! wow! wow!" cried Rags in a frenzy of grief.



"Do let him go! Tom and I will take turns carrying him when he is tired," said Alice.

"Yes, do!" urged Tom.

"Let us see, Rags, if you'll fit into my blazer pocket," mused Uncle Phil.

"Yes; but it is a tight fit. How do you like that, my friend?"

The children shouted at Rags. His little wild head looked very funny peeping from Uncle Phil's pocket.

"I think we shall be able to manage it," said Uncle Phil. "Now, I hope every one has a good lunch. You must feed me, too. Cookies, Tom?"

"Yes," said Tom, with dancing eyes. "Nora knows how you like her cookies. She has put in a gingerbread donkey—just for you."

"That's kind," said Uncle Phil with a smile. "Nora was always such a friend to me."

"Be at home for supper, Philip," said Mrs. Pryor, as she waved a good-by.

After following the road for some time, they turned into a lane that led between two fields. Along the path were thickets of wild rosebushes fairly starred with the tender, pink, golden-hearted blossoms. A constant flutter and chirping proved that many little homes were sheltered here.

Wild grapevines clambered over the alder and hazel bushes, throwing a faint yet delicious odor upon the breeze. Clematis was beginning to show tangled knots of pale green.

By the brookside wild forget-me-nots opened their stars of pale yet perfect blue. Here and there a graceful elm followed the stone wall. In one place the lane was arched overhead by maples and birches.

A mother quail suddenly crossed the road before them. She was followed by three tiny, comical babies plunging along in awkward quail fashion.

Tom dropped, and clutched Rags, holding his hand firmly over the dog's mouth.

"I said I would be good," barked the poor dog, when he was once more free. "Can't you trust me, Tom? I only say 'How do you do?' to the birds. I am very much interested in the birds. I should like to make a study of them. But how can I when I may neither speak nor shake hands?"

The field on one side was full of red-winged blackbirds. They seemed to resent the coming of the strangers, and flew about in excitement, giving their alarm note, "Chŭ-chŭ-chŭ!" There was a swamp close by, and Uncle Phil had the children notice how oozy and like black water and mud was that cry.

Some dainty little yellow birds flew ahead, chasing one another through the bushes. "Pi-ty, pi-ty!" they cried, in sweet yet mournful tones.

By and by the travellers began to climb to some high, breezy pastures. The grass was short and fine, and at every step clouds of grasshoppers flew up about them. Scattered here and there were tall pines and groups of white birches.

"Look at that bird!" said Tom to Alice in low tones.

A dark, grayish-brown bird was hopping a few yards ahead. Now and then it turned and looked at them. Then it would skulk at one side, taking a sweet-fern bush as a cover.

"Halloa!" said Rags.

The bird flew up and away, showing two long white quills on the edges of its tail.

"That was a vesper sparrow," said Uncle Phil, "so called because he sings his sweetest song at twilight. He likes a high, breezy field. No meadows or orchards for him!"

The field suddenly dipped into a hollow. White birches stood about shaking their tremulous leaves.

"There's a spring in here if I remember rightly," said Uncle Phil.

"And raspberry-bushes!" cried Alice. "Look, Tom, some of the berries are almost ripe!"

## II

They found the spring bubbling up among the fern. The children thought no water could be more delicious. After they had all had a drink they hunted for more raspberries.

"They are so much nicer than garden berries," said Alice, staining mouth and fingers.

"You are right, Alice," said Uncle Phil. "Make a wild fruit *tame* and it loses its flavor. We find raspberries and white birch so often together that I think of them as relatives."

Uncle Phil had thrown himself upon the mosses. He lay back with his arms under his head, looking at the children with a lazy smile.

"Oh, Uncle Phil," cried Alice, dropping down beside him, "do tell us a story! You look just like it. Tell us about the fairies, or anything."

Uncle Phil's glance swept across the breezy field. It rested upon the shimmering, swaying birches.

"Trees again!" groaned Rags. "I think I'll leave for a while, or my feelings may get the better of me."

So he trotted off to examine into the mysteries of grasshopper housekeeping.

"The white birch is the maiden of the woods, with her snowy limbs and waving tresses," began Uncle Phil. "She is like a child, never of the same mind for two minutes.

"First we find her by the highway, then she climbs the hillslope. Now she gleams at us from the woodland shadows. Now she dances before us in the breezy field.

"One moment she prefers the rich loam of the forest. The next, she chooses the sandy wayside soil.

"Wherever the pine goes the birch follows. Cut off your pine grove from the southern slope and in a few years the place is crowded with oaks and birches. I wonder why this is so?

"I think the seeds must have been lying there

a long time. But there was no chance for anything else under the great pines. Big trees are very selfish. They take all the rain, and the little trees have small chance for life.

"Sometimes I find a lone birch in the forest with none other of its kind near. Usually they grow in clusters or rows. They are social creatures, and enjoy their kind.

"They are such graceful little ladies! I love to see them sway in the breezes. Only the trunks are white. All the branches are dark brown, almost black, and spotted with white.

"Get me a branch, Tom. I want you to see how beautiful the leaf is. How curiously it is put on! Was there ever a prettier leaf? See what a perfect triangle of the softest, most satiny green. The fairies could n't ask a lovelier green for their cloaks, could they, Alice?

"See how daintily it is scalloped and crimped at the edges! Look! every stem is put on with a quirk. How can the birch-leaves help dancing with every breeze? And see the little bud in the axil of each leaf!

"We must find some black birch and peel it to chew. 'Tis almost as good as young checker-berry leaves.

"After all, I prefer my lady birch. Once I was in the wilds all summer. Then I learned to know my birch. I made my cup of her bark. Oh, how delicious the water was! Talk of wine! it is

nothing beside cold spring water from a birch-bark dipper.

"I fished in the lake from a canoe of birch-bark, and my tent was made from it. I made sketches and wrote letters on the thin inner lining. I even sent a poem to my lady-love on birch-bark."

"Yes," cried Alice, "and I have it now."

"There's a legend — Alice always wants the fairy tales.

"An iron-hearted king had seven fair daughters. He did not remember their youth. He kept them close at home always — always spinning.

"But when night came they stole out into the forest and danced with the wood nymphs. Then it was that the dryads opened their tree trunks, and the water nixy rose from the fountain.

"Then it was that Pan stirred in the heart of the forest and woke the echoes with his pipe, — golden in daytime hours, silver under the moonbeams.

"The big owls sat on the treetops. All the wood creatures crept from their lairs to look and listen.

"Kindest of all was Cynthia, the gentle moon who gazed down to light the revels. But one night the king followed and saw his daughters. In his anger he changed them to trees.

"Still they stand and wave in the springtide their green mantles. In the winter one catches

a glimpse of white limbs veiled in the dusk of dark locks. Oh, the old king was not so cruel after all!

"They are forever young and happy—always dancing, always loved of bird and man. Tom, why do you stare so at me with those big eyes? Did n't you like the story? Rather have injuns?"

"No, no!" said Tom hastily. "I like all your stories—only," very dolefully, "I am *so* hungry!"

"Well, well!" said Uncle Phil. "Where are those baskets? I want my donkey. Hungry, Rags?"

"A little," said Rags modestly. "I have finished my seventeenth grasshopper, but think I could manage a cooky, thank you."



### XXXI. — THE BOBOLINK

“Pipe blown through by the warm, wild breath of the West,  
Shepherding his soft droves of fleecy cloud,  
Gladness of woods, skies, waters, all in one,  
The bobolink has come.”

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.



**A**LICE was taking a walk with Frances. She was a dear little friend from the city, who was spending a few days with Alice.

Frances was seven, but very small for her age. She had a round face, with big black eyes, and a little dark, curly head.

Her hand was so tiny it was almost lost in Alice's clasp. To Alice she seemed like a big doll: very frail, very wonderful and precious.

They had been to the barn and seen Max the brown horse, and all the hens. Prettytoes had rubbed her soft coat against Frances's feet.

"Why, she loves me," said the child in great delight.

Now they were on their way to the corner of the field where Sally Muggins was feeding. In the kindergarten Frances had heard about cows. She had never seen one at very close range.

"Now, dear, you must not think of being afraid," said Alice. "Sally is very big, but she is the kindest creature. I give her hay and grass to eat and she does n't hurt me. Her mouth is pretty big when it opens, but you must not mind that."

Sally was feeding quietly near the stone wall. When the children came up she moved toward them.

"Oh!" said little Frances, beginning to tremble.

"Please don't be afraid, darling," said Alice tenderly. "Do you think I'd take you where you could get hurt? Sally is asking me to feed her. Stay here and I'll give her something."

Alice ran ahead and offered a great bunch of grasses and clover she had pulled. Sally opened a mouth that made Frances fairly turn pale. Alice ran back and took the small hand again.

"Why, dear, you're just shaking all over!"

"I'm not *much* afraid," said little Frances, "only she is *so* big, and her mouth is just 'nормous. And she has n't any teeth in front, Alice."

"I know it," replied Alice. "She is n't a meat-

eater like the dog, so she does n't need sharp front teeth. She has some broad, flat teeth, though, to grind her grass and hay. You ought to see Mr. Rolf's Sweetlips, Frances. Our Sally is a good, kind cow, but Sweetlips is the prettiest cow I ever saw."

"What is that bird, the one making such a fuss?" asked Frances.

"Oh, that's a bobolink. He has a nest here somewhere. I wish I could find it."

"I don't like him; he's a noisy bird; he's too noisy," said Frances.

"Oh, you funny little midget!" cried Alice, stooping to kiss her friend.

In the mean time the noisy bird had perched on a tall clover stalk, that bent under his weight.

"See, Frances," said Alice, "is n't he a funny bird? See those white spots on his back, and the white on his shoulders. Our poem at school says —

"Robert of Lincoln is gayly dressed,  
Wearing a bright black wedding coat,  
White are his shoulders and white his crest;  
Hear him call in his merry note!  
Bobolink! bobolink! spink, spank, spink!"

"Alice," whispered Frances, "a lady is coming."

"Oh, it's dear Miss Merriam," cried Alice.

"Let's run!"

So the two children clasped hands and ran over the grass.

"This is my Frances," said Alice. "She's

coming to school with me Monday. We've been watching the bobolink."

"Just what I came here to do," replied Alice's teacher, after she had greeted the children. "I feel as if I must find the nest. I have tried twice before; but I think that saucy bird has led me astray on purpose. See! There's Mrs. Bobolink, Alice."

"Why, she's a *brown* bird, not a bit like her mate."

"I know it, and I can tell you something very queer. When fall comes Mr. Bobolink changes his black and white coat for one like his wife's."

"Why?" asked Alice.

"It is safer for him. He flies south to the grass lands, where they call him the reed bird. Then later he goes to the rice swamps, where he eats, eats, eats until he is as fat as butter.

"He does n't sing then. He is a very stupid little bird. The hunters shoot the rice birds by the dozen and sell them in the market. Now I *must* find that nest."

Mr. Bobolink hovered over a tall tuft of grass, shouting, "See! see! See here! here! here!"

Miss Merriam looked into the tuft, but nothing was there.

"He! he! he!" snickered Bob from a bunch of weeds. Miss Merriam walked toward the weeds, looking under every clover cluster and tall daisy.

Bob and his mate soared to the other end of the field. Under the weed clump was only a very lively family of crickets.

"Let us sit down and keep perfectly still," said Miss Merriam.

So the three dropped on the grass, and pulled the timothy stems over their dresses. After a little the birds flew back. They were not flying very high. The children could see how they turned their wings down until they looked like open umbrellas.

Finally, the wife dropped suddenly and was hidden in the grasses. Her mate still soared and circled, singing as if he were fairly beside himself.

"Bobolink ! bobolink - link - link - dink - dink ! Here ! here ! See ! Phew ! Shoo ! Dink ! dink ! Tom Denny-leedle-deedle !" sang the crazy fellow.

Miss Merriam stole over toward Mrs. Bobolink. As she neared a tussock of dried grass the brown bird flew up. She fluttered about the intruder's head with every show of fear and anxiety.

"I must be near it," thought the hunter, with fast-beating heart.

Where was the nest ? Both birds by this time were away. Miss Merriam was sure that saucy Bob was laughing at her.

"Oh ! see-see ! Let-be, let-be ! Can't see ! can't see ! Can't-let-be ! Here-here ! Near-near ! Oh here ! Oh here ! See-near ! See-near !"

came tittering over the grasses. Still the search went on.

As Bob and his mate would n't show the nest, the others tried to find it for themselves. It seemed as if they hunted in every square inch of that field. Bob scolded and made fun of them by turns.

Sometimes he was tilting on the grasses, calling "Here! here!" Then he was soaring overhead, crying, "Leedle-deedle-deedle-leedle."

Once in a while he would have a fit of wild mirth. These strange beings prowling about his country seemed to amuse him.

"He! he! he! Can't see! can't see! Oh phew! phew! Can't do! Can't do!" he jeered.

He would perch on the fence-rail, silent for a moment. Then across the field would come a scornful, long-drawn "Can't see-e-e-e!"

At last the search was given up. Miss Merriam shook her head at the provoking bird.

"You are a naughty fellow," she said. "You don't know your friends from your enemies. We only want to see those pretty, brown-specked eggs. Why, we would n't hurt them for anything."

"That is a queer bird," said little Frances; "he makes my head ache. He's too fussy."

"My grandfather says the bobolink is the corn-planting-bird," said Miss Merriam. "He says, 'Dig a hole, dig a hole, put it in, put it in, cover 't up, cover 't up, step on 't, step along.'"

Later in the day Alice ran into the field to look for a handkerchief Frances had dropped there. Suddenly she saw a brown bird lying on the ground. Her heart beat loud and fast. Had she found the bobolink's nest?

She stood very still. But the little wife had heard even her light footfall. She gave a "twitter-itter" of fear and darted away. Alice bent forward.

There lay the nest with rosy clovers nodding about it. There lay the smooth round eggs, flecked and dashed heavily with reddish-brown.

"Come back, little mother," said Alice gently. "Come back, or the dear eggs will get cold. I'll not hurt you. Come back, little bird."

## XXXII.—THE O'LINCOLN FAMILY

A FLOCK of merry singing-birds were sporting in the grove ;  
Some were warbling cheerily, and some were making love ;

There were Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Wintersuble, Conquedle, —

A livelier set was never led by tabor, pipe, or fiddle, —  
Crying, "Phew, shew, Wadolincon, see, see, Bobolincon,  
Down among the tickletops, hiding in the buttercups !  
I know the saucy chap, I see his shining cap  
Bobbing in the clover there, — see, see, see."

Up flies Bobolincon, perching on an apple-tree,  
Startled by his rival's song, quickened by his raillery,  
Soon he spies the rogue afloat, curveting in the air,  
And merrily he turns about, and warns him to beware !  
" 'Tis you that would a-wooing go, down among the  
rushes O !

But wait a week, till flowers are cheery, — wait a week,  
and ere you marry,  
Be sure of a house wherein to tarry !  
Wadolink, Whiskodink, Tom Denny, wait, wait, wait ! "

Every one's a funny fellow ; every one's a little mellow ;  
Follow, follow, follow, follow, o'er the hill and in the hollow !

Merrily, merrily, there they hie ; now they rise and now they fly ;



They cross and turn, and in and out, and down the middle, and wheel about, —

With a “Phew, shew, Wadolincon! listen to me, Bobolincon! —

Happy’s the wooing that’s speedily doing,  
That’s merry and over with the bloom of the clover!  
Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Wintersuble, follow me.

“Oh, what a happy life we lead, o’er hills and o’er the meads!

How we sing and how we play, see, see, we fly away!  
Now we gambol o’er the clearing, off again, then re-  
appearing

Poised aloft on quivering wing, how we soar and how we sing!

Let’s be merry and moving, let’s be happy and loving;  
For when midsummer has gone, and the grain has filled  
the ear,

And the reapers scatter our young, then, Bobolincon,  
Wadolincon, Wintersuble,

Haste away!”

WILSON FLAGG.

### XXXIII. — FOURTH OF JULY

"The patriotism of the average small boy is measured by the amount of noise he can make on this occasion.

"If torpedoes and fire-crackers suffice, he is but lukewarm. Add horns and gunpowder from sunrise to sunset, and he is a hero, ready to pledge all on his country's altar."



#### I. — THE NIGHT BEFORE

LEASE, mother dear, say 'Yes.' " Alice hung on Mrs. Pryor's arm and looked up pleadingly into her face.

"But if Mollie is with you, you two will chatter half the night."

"We don't mind if we don't sleep," replied Alice. "We want to get up early enough to see the 'Horribles.'"

"But if you do this foolish thing, you won't half enjoy the day, you'll be so tired."

"You say it is always best to learn by experience," said Alice soberly. "Please give me the chance."

Mrs. Pryor smiled in spite of herself, and Mr. Pryor bent low over his paper.

"Very well, Alice, you shall have your own way. But if it turns out badly — remember, no complaints!"

"Oh, thank you, mother dear, for giving me a chance to be foolish just once," said Alice gayly. "Now I'll run and tell Mollie."

"Do you dread to-morrow?" asked Mr. Pryor.

"A little," replied his wife, "but, after all, it is natural she should wish it. They shall have the spare room; then no one will mind the chatter."

The girls were much pleased with the honor. "Now, Mollie, we can talk forever if we like," said Alice. "Let's stay awake all night."

"Why, do you s'pose we can?"

"We can tell stories and —— Mollie, I know a way. We can sit up all night."

"But our heads will slip."

"Well, we can do up our hair in curl papers."

"I'd like to have curls," said Mollie; "Hazel's are lovely."

"Yes, they are: I just hate straight hair. Mother will do up the papers for us."

"Mother," said Alice, dancing out on the piazza, "will you please do up our hair in curl papers? We should like curls, because to-morrow is the Fourth of July. Then it will help us keep awake. If our heads slip, the papers will wake us up."

"Very well," said Mrs. Pryor, laughing. "Get me comb and brush and a basin of water; I also need scissors, pins, and some of that stiffest brown *paper*."

"There's no half-way about our Alice," said Mr. Pryor as the children ran away.

"Yes," replied his wife, "Alice likes to test things for herself. Now *you* shall cut the curl papers."

"Of your stiffest brown paper, I notice," said Mr. Pryor, his brown eyes twinkling.

Alice winced a little when the first curl paper was twisted and pinned. "That pulls — mother!"

"Oh, excuse me, dear," replied Mrs. Pryor. "In order to make them stay up, you must have the papers rather tight."

"Mollie, your head looks like a big corn-ball," Alice said, laughing, when the work was finished.

"I don't look any funnier than you," said Mollie.

The wide-awake children sat up in bed against the head-board. Long after the rest of the house was quiet, the little tongues were chattering.

"Alice," said Mollie after a long pause, "don't you begin to feel sleepy?"

"Yes, a little. Let's get up and wash our faces, then we'll be all right."

"That's better," said Alice after they were once more settled. "Now don't talk any more, but just bend your mind to keeping awake."

"Alice," said Mollie suddenly, "you are going to sleep."

"I am *not*," said Alice jumping.

There was a long silence. The two heads

leaned nearer and nearer together. Suddenly they touched with a whack!

"Oh dear me!" cried Mollie, "how you did hurt me!"

"You hurt *me* just as much," retorted sleepy Alice, crossly.

"I sha'n't try to sit up any longer," and Mollie slid down on the pillow. "Ugh! it feels just horrid!"

"Does n't it! I don't believe I care so much for curls; do you?"

A little later Alice heard a rustling. "What are you doing, dear?"

"I can't stand these papers a minute longer," replied Mollie, fretfully. "I'm going to take out every one of them."

"So am I," said Alice. "Oh, how these pins prick!"

"I guess Mrs. Pryor wanted our hair to curl up tight," said Mollie, yawning.

"I guess she wants me to have plenty of experience," thought poor Alice, with tears in her eyes.

They tugged, pulled, pricked their hands, and tore the paper, but at last the thing was done.

Two little heads slid down upon the pillows with sighs of relief.

In a second they were both in the Land of Nod.

## II. — THE MORNING AFTER

Bang! went something outside the window.

"What's that?" said Mollie drowsily. "We've only been asleep a little while."

"It's Tom! He said he would get up before we did," cried Alice. "We must hurry, dear, or we shall miss the Horribles."

The two girls tumbled out of bed and scrambled into their clothes.

"Why, it's night," said Mollie, as they opened the hall door.

Overhead the stars were still shining, though growing very pale, and just then the clock struck: one — two — three!

"Is that you, Tom?" There was a giggle among the honeysuckles and another bang!

"Don't, please, Tom! You'll wake mother."

Tom and Percy stepped out, their pockets bulging with fire-crackers and torpedoes.

"We'll go on the avenue," whispered Alice, "and then mother won't hear. Isn't it strange, Tom, that father and mother don't care about getting up early on the Fourth?"

"I can't understand it," said Tom earnestly. "If I live to be a hundred, I shall *always* like to do it."

"I'm sure I shall, too," replied Alice.

For two hours the avenue echoed with the snap of torpedoes and the bang of crackers. To the

children it seemed that noise, a great noise and a good deal of it, was the object of the glorious Fourth.

At six they started to meet the Horribles. By this time half the school had collected at Alice's house.

No one was quite sure where the parade started, but Guy had heard it was at Mossy Meadows, a full mile away.

But everything was quiet at Mossy Meadows. A woman sweeping her porch advised them to go to River View. Another long mile tramp, still no Horribles. Suddenly a faint sound of music came across the fields.

"They are at the Centre after all," said Percy. "If we cut across lots we shall save time."

So over the bars climbed the children, and across the dewy fields they ran. They climbed fences, they waded tall grass, they jumped brooks. At last, tired and panting, they reached Main Street.

The parade was just starting. It was such a collection of funny things! There was a giant with a horrible face who could stretch his neck until he was ten feet tall. There were fairies, goblins, brownies, and gypsies.

All the bicycle clubs were in gay or quaint attire. Every old horse and broken-down wagon in town had been called into use.

"See, Mollie," whispered Alice, "that team

says, 'Mollie and me and the baby.' Why! they have a real pig dressed up as a baby! Hear it squeal!"

When the parade had passed, they ran down another street to see it again. It was very exciting. Alice thought she could never weary of it.

At half-past eight Mr. and Mrs. Pryor were watching the parade from their own piazza.

"How many children are following!" the lady remarked. "I suppose they come from those back streets near the river."

"They are from nearer home than that," said Mr. Pryor. "There is our Alice."

"Why, Arnold, it can't be possible."

No wonder Mrs. Pryor had hard work to recognize in that little gypsy girl her own daughter. Alice's long hair hung uncombed over her shoulders. Her dress was torn and full of burned places. She had cut a slit in one stocking climbing over some bars. She had left behind the heel of one boot when she scrambled over a stone wall. Her hat was on one side, her face was red and moist. She was very tired and very happy.

"We've had a jolly time," cried the child, "and we're as hungry as bears."

"I suppose you've had enough of fire-crackers," said Mr. Pryor at the breakfast table.

"Why, indeed, *no*!" cried Alice in amazement. "We have a lot left, and we're going to set them off until it is dark."



## III. — THE END OF IT ALL

At dinner time Mollie and Alice returned from Tom's, looking weary.

"Do rest a little this afternoon," urged Mrs. Pryor.

"I think we will," said Alice, "just for an hour. Come into the library, Mollie, it's so cool there. You take the couch, and I'll have father's steamer chair. If Tom comes over, say we'll be out by half-past two."

Mr. Pryor returned from his walk at five o'clock.

"I've had a very quiet afternoon," said his wife, smiling.

"I suppose those crazy girls are off again," he remarked.

"They are both sound asleep in the library," she replied. "They dropped off within ten minutes after dinner. I believe I must awaken them, after all."

Alice and Mollie awoke at six, very much surprised to find that they had been asleep. After tea they went to the Club House to see the fireworks that the neighborhood had planned.

Tom met them, looking a little sheepish. He did not wish the girls to know that he had been slumbering in the hammock all the afternoon.

Rags was there also with Mops White, Frisk Dawson, and numerous cronies. He was angry with his master, who had shut him up the night

before, and he felt obliged to treat Tom with coldness. Even the joyful excitement of the crackers and torpedoes had but partly consoled him.

At the Club House he was engaged in earnest discussion with Sir Charles Grandison, Dr. Talbot's English mastiff.

"We licked you, we Americans," he said, tauntingly.

"I don't believe it," said Sir Charles. "England has never been whipped, never!"

"But we did," insisted Rags. "On the Fourth of July, 1776, our best men met in Philadelphia and there drew up the famous Declaration of Independence. In it we swore that no tyrant foe should impose its yoke upon our freeborn necks, —and they never have."

"I hope England will declare war in less than a week. She'll whip you all to nothing."

"I'd like to see her try it," said Rags with a peculiar smile. "We'd just sink that little island of yours in mid-ocean so that it would never be heard from again."

"You are spoiling for a fight, Rags," said Tom, coming up just then. "What *is* the matter with you? Come home now, the fireworks are over."

"You shall hear from me soon," said Sir Charles stiffly.

"I am ready to meet you," returned Rags proudly.

"You're tired, old fellow," said Tom, hugging

his dear friend as they turned homeward, "but not so tired as I."

"Oh, I'm not very tired," barked Rags, "but my blood is up. Rags will never stand calmly by and let his country be insulted. Come on, haughty cur! I will defend my country's honor with my life."

## XXXIV. — THE BIRDS AND THE POETS

### THE ROBIN

"The sobered robin, hunger-silent now,  
Seeks cedar-berries blue, his autumn cheer."  
LOWELL.

"In that continuous redbreast boding rain."  
LOWELL.

"Now was the winter gone and the snow; and Robin the Redbreast  
Boasted on bush and tree, it was he, it was he and no other  
That had covered with leaves the Babes in the Wood, and blithely  
All the birds sang with him, and little cared for his boasting,  
Or for his Babes in the Wood, or the Cruel Uncle, and only  
Sang for the mates they had chosen and cared for the nests they were  
building."

LONGFELLOW.

### THE BLUEBIRD

"The bluebird in the meadow brakes  
Is singing with the brook."  
WHITTIER.

"While yet the bluebird smoothed in leafless trees  
His feathers ruffled by the chill sea breeze." •  
WHITTIER.

### THE ORIOLE

"My oriole, my glance of summer fire,  
Is come at last."  
LOWELL.

"An oriole clattered and the robins shrilled."  
LOWELL.

### THE BOBOLINK

"The bobolink tinkled; the deep meadows flowed."  
LOWELL.

## ALICE AND TOM

"Merrily swinging on brier and weed,  
 Near to the nest of his little dame,  
 Over the mountain-side or mead,  
 Robert of Lincoln is telling his name.  
 Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
 Spink, spank, spink;  
 Snug and safe is this nest of ours,  
 Hidden among the summer flowers,  
 Chee, chee, chee."

BRYANT.

## THE LARK AND OWL

"The lark is but a bumpkin fowl,  
 He sleeps in his nest till morn;  
 But blessings on the jolly owl,  
 That all night blows his horn."

SCOTT.

## THE LARK

"Up with me! up with me into the clouds!  
 For thy song, lark, is strong;  
 Up with me! up with me into the clouds!  
 Singing, singing,  
 With clouds and sky about thee ringing;  
 Lift me, guide me till I find  
 That spot which seems so to thy mind!

"There is madness about thee, and joy divine  
 In that song of thine.  
 Lift me, guide me, high and high,  
 To thy banqueting-place in the sky."

WORDSWORTH.

"Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,  
 And Phœbus 'gins arise,  
 His steeds to water at those springs  
 On chaliced flowers that lies;  
 And winking Mary-buds begin  
 To ope their golden eyes;  
 With everything that pretty bin,  
 My lady sweet, arise;  
 Arise, arise!"

SHAKESPEARE.

"The purple finch that on wild-cherry and red-cedar feeds,  
A winter-bird, comes with its plaintive whistle,  
And pecks by the witch-hazel."

WHITTIER.

"O blithe newcomer! I have heard,  
I hear thee and rejoice.  
O cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,  
Or but a wandering voice?"

WORDSWORTH.

"The only hammer that I hear  
Is wielded by the woodpecker."

LOWELL.

"When the pheebe scarce whistles  
Once an hour to his fellow."

LOWELL.

"A thrush is ringing  
Till all the alder coverts dark  
Seem sunshine-dappled with his singing."

LOWELL.

"Now rings the woodland loud and long,  
The distance takes a lovelier hue,  
And, drowned in yonder living blue  
The lark becomes a sightless song."

TENNYSON.

#### OTHER BIRDS

"The cock's shrill trump that tells of scattered corn,  
Passed breezily on by all his flapping mates."

LOWELL.

"Silently overhead the hen-hawk sails  
With watchful, measuring eye."

LOWELL.

"The thin-winged swallow skating on the air."

LOWELL.

"I hear the rabbit lightly leaping,  
And the foolish screaming of the jay."

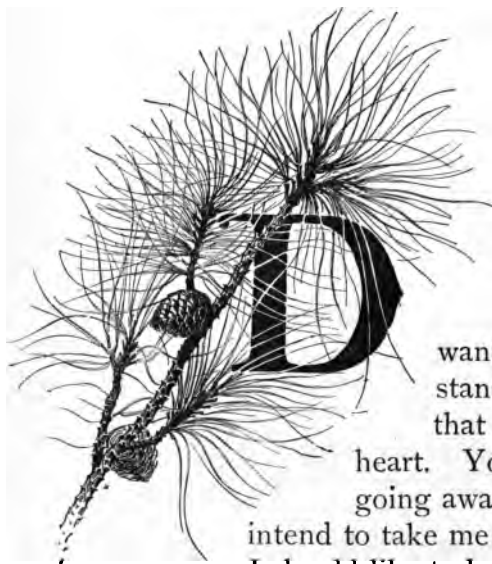
WHITTIER.

## XXXV. — CAMPING OUT

### I

"I said, I will not walk with men to-day,  
But I will go among the trees, —  
Among the forest trees I'll take my way,  
And they shall say to me what words they please."

THE TREES.



E A R Rags,"  
said Alice,  
"won't you  
please try to  
understand?"  
"No, I won't!"  
barked Rags  
in a perfect  
fury. "You

want me to under-  
stand something  
that will break my  
heart. You and Tom are  
going away! You do not  
intend to take me! Why is that,  
I should like to know?"

"There! there!" said Tom soothingly. "We  
leave you at home because the place where we go  
is not a good one for dogs. There are miles and

## CAMPING OUT

miles of water, and more trees than you ever in all your life. You know you don't like trees, Rags."

"I don't care," barked Rags, "I want to go! I will go anywhere so long as I can go with you."

"The train is coming, children," said Mr. Bennett. "Here, Rags, watch this," and he threw his cap on the platform. Rags took his place sadly: he was too faithful not to obey.

Alice and Tom gave him a last hug, with tearful eyes. As the train rumbled away, they caught a glimpse of the dear little fellow in Mr. Bennett's arms. He was not barking, but the whole droop of his form made the children's hearts sink.

"Crying, Alice?" said Uncle Phil.

"I can't help it," sobbed Alice. "Rags will *die* before we get home."

"Oh, no, he won't, — he's such a busy fellow, you know. There's the Dog Club — he's been elected President. Things are in bad shape there. He'll have to do a good deal to straighten them out. Then, you know, he may have to lecture before the Summer School. What do you think of these subjects, Alice, — 'Cats: how to make them love you;' 'Laws against the flying of birds;' 'Trees: how they may be prevented?'"

Alice smiled: she knew that dear Uncle Phil was trying to lead her mind to happier subjects.

They were really bound for the camp Uncle Phil loved, among the beautiful Squaw Lakes.



Father, mother, Uncle Phil, Miss Merriam, Alice and Tom, were going into the wilds.

It was such a pleasant journey, past busy towns and lovely villages, through a wide country where the pale-blue mountains beckoned from the horizon's edge. The travellers sailed for several hours on a beautiful lake, where they floated silently, violet mountain peaks appearing and re-appearing, the silvery mists curling from their sides.

At Binden, Jeremiah was awaiting them with a three-seated mountain wagon. There was also an express team for the trunks, driven by a lank, roguish-looking lad known as Ike.

Jeremiah had a gruff voice and kindly eyes. His glance seemed to say, "I wonder if you're going to be nuisances, and whether or not I'll take you fishing."

Ike gave a broad wink at Tom when no one else was looking. The two were to ride with the trunks.

They were soon climbing the great hill back of Binden. The air was fresh and keen, and heavy with the odors of pine and sweet fern. Tom felt as if he could fly like the swallows tracking the deep blue overhead.

"Wal," said Ike, "s'pose you 'spect to catch a hundred-pound fish while you're up here."

"Fresh-water fish don't usually weigh that," said Tom demurely.

"The fish in our lake are so thick that sometimes you can't go out rowin'," went on Ike; "an' they get right up on their tails and beg you to catch them. What do you think of that?"

"It will go very well with your other fish story," replied Tom with a perfectly sober face.

Ike chuckled: "Do ye know w'at that is standin' against that wall?"

"Elderberry," said Tom; "it grows where I live. Do *you* know what that bird is?"

"A crow or a brown thrasher, I guess," faltered Ike.

"Why, that's a white-throated sparrow," said Tom. "He stays with us for about a month in the spring. He says, 'Sow wheat, Peabody — Peabody — Peabody.'"

"Wal! wal!" was all Ike remarked, but he thought, "The little chap is n't any greenhorn, even if he does come from Bosting-way."

After a while the road turned into the woods.

"We love the woods, don't we?" said Alice, leaning against her dear friend's shoulder.

"Ah! indeed we do," said Miss Merriam, with a little caress. "One of my friends has said: —

"' But he who spends an hour within the wood,  
Hath fed on fairy food.'"

"Would n't it be just lovely if we could find the fairies?" cried the little girl.

In another moment the horses drew up in a large clearing.

"Welcome to Camp Fairchild," said Uncle Phil, swinging Alice down to the ground.

She saw a sparkle of blue ahead and a glimmer of tents among the trees. Several people came running to them over the pine-needle carpet. A little girl seized her hand eagerly.

"I'm Betty Fairchild," she said, laughing all over her pretty brown face. "You're Alice Pryor, and I'm so glad to see you."

Betty's mouth was like a red, red rose, and her dark curls bobbed over her brow. Alice felt a sudden and great content.



## XXXVI. — CAMPING OUT

### II. — *Continued.*

“And when I came among the trees of God,  
With all their thousand voices sweet and blest,  
They gave me welcome. So I slowly trod  
Their arched and lofty aisles with heart at rest.”

THE TREES.

“WHO is Miss Merriam?” whispered Betty, when the two girls were free to run away.

“She is my teacher.”

“Do you like to have her here? Does n’t she make you think of lessons, and long, tiresome hours in the school-room?”

“Why, I never have too much of her,” cried Alice in amazement. “She is one of my very best friends. She’s the sweetest, dearest lady in the world next to mother.”

“Oh, you really like her, then?”

“Like her!” echoed Alice in a choked voice, “why, *I love* her. I can’t tell you how much I love her.”

“Oh,” said Betty, greatly impressed; “of course, then, I shall like her, and be glad she has come. Has she been your teacher long?”

“Ever since I went to school,” cried Alice, with

a little sob. "And next term I'm going to lose her. I shall have to be promoted into the Grammar School. I can't bear to leave Miss Merriam. I have cried at night a good many times lately thinking of it. But don't let us talk about it any more."

"I am so thankful you came," said Betty. "When I saw another boy I almost fainted! Does n't Tom ever tease you?"

"Sometimes, only I really think I tease him more than he does me. He's just like my brother, and the dearest boy. I wish he were my real brother."

"Don't wish for a real brother," said Betty, shaking her dark curls. "He would live only to plague you."

Alice and Betty ran about and explored the entire camp. They visited the wharf, where several canoes and a steam launch were anchored. They peeped into the tents, where the white cot-beds were all ready for their weary occupants.

On the slope of the hill was a large log house, encircled by broad piazzas, where hammocks swung, and chairs and couches invited repose. There was a long dining-hall in the house, and a smaller room behind it, with a loft overhead.

"See the big fireplace," said Betty. "We have a rousing fire here when it is cold or stormy. In the smaller room you may read or write when you want to be quiet. The kitchen is a house by itself back among the trees."

"What do you do all day?" asked Alice, very much interested.

"We go out on the lake to sail or fish or explore, and we take walks or drives. We hunt for flowers and watch birds and pick berries. Do you swim, Alice?"

"I am learning," said Alice; "we have swimming baths in our town. Do you like to climb, Betty?"

"I love to," said the little lady joyously. "You like the same things I do, Alice."

Alice thought the early supper delightful. They had blackberries, brown bread, and fresh lake trout fried to a crisp, golden brown.

Tom sat nearly opposite with Dick and Horace Fairchild. Dick made up faces at Betty, and went through a remarkable series of gestures that puzzled Alice.

"What does he mean?" she inquired, turning to her friend.

"He means that here is another girl to tease, with long braids to pull, and hair ribbons to steal."

"I don't think he'll do either," said Alice, with dignity.

"Oh, my dear, you don't *know* boys," replied Betty, shaking her head wisely.

After tea they all went out on the lake. They rowed about until the shadows crept from mountain to mountain, and a lone whippoorwill lamented from the swamp.

Then the moon rose, silvering the landscape. A strain of music crept upon the quiet air. Both Dick and Horace Fairchild sang a clear, high, thrilling soprano, while little Betty joined in with a deep, rich contralto.

Tom did not know why there was such a lump in his throat, and Alice hid her head in Miss Merriam's lap.

"O lovely moon!"

rang the childish voices, while the Queen of Night rose in majesty from the dark mountains. The quiet lake waters stole the radiance and were a silver flood. The shores caught the echoes and threw them back.

Overhead the stars crept out, and night birds called to one another across the waves. Alice went up from the wharf holding Miss Merriam's hand. After she had been tucked away and the good-nights said, there was a restless turning, broken by a stifled sob.

"What is it, dear?" said the friend, leaning over and patting Alice's shoulder.

The child turned a little tear-stained face to hers.

"What is it, Alice?"

"I could n't help thinking of it," she murmured.

"Of what, my little girl?"

"About next fall, when I must be promoted and leave you."

Miss Merriam was silent a moment.

"Dear Alice," at last she said, "I, too, have been thinking about it. But it is a thing that must come. It is a hard thing for both of us, but a right thing. You will never lose me as a friend. And you will try not to make it harder, Alice?"

"I'll try not to," murmured the child.

"Now go to sleep, my little friend. Hear the pines sing a sleepy song! To-morrow there will be a long, beautiful day in the woods."

"Will you hold my hand?" begged Alice in an unsteady voice.

"Yes, dear child. Now go to sleep, my Alice."

Miss Merriam held the little hand until it relaxed in her grasp. Then she laid it gently down and turned on her pillow with something very like a sigh, as she whispered:—

"Oh the beautiful love and faithfulness of a child-heart!"



## XXXVII. — CAMPING OUT

### III. — *Concluded*

"Then all around me as I went  
Their loving arms they lightly bent,  
And all around leaf-voices low,  
Were calling, calling soft and slow;  
I could not fail to know  
The words they whispered so,  
Nor could I onward go  
From words so sweet and low."

THE TREES.



"That is not so bad. I wish to have you keep quiet this afternoon."

"They make me so angry," went on Betty. "They say they are older than we girls, and *know more of life*, and have had *more experience*." Betty's little nose went up scornfully.

Every one laughed, and Mrs. Pryor said soothingly, "I would not mind even that. It is just as well for you boys and girls to be sometimes apart. Then, when you come together again, you will enjoy one another all the more."

Miss Merriam strolled off into the forest, a child on either side, for by this time Betty was an equal adorer with Alice.

Their way led among grand pines and hemlocks, and they looked up, up into a world of green branches, with here and there a fleck of blue sky peeping through. Spicy odors came down to them, and from the "green lyres" of the pines a sad, sweet music stole.

"We spent last summer in Europe," said Betty, "and when we went into great cathedrals I always thought of our pine groves."

"That is very natural," said Miss Merriam. "The oldest builders must have got their ideas from the forest aisles. These rows of grand tree-trunks suggested the pillars or columns. The branches meeting overhead gave them the pointed roof."

"I read in one of father's books something like this," said Alice:—

"'The groves were God's first temples.'"

"That is from Bryant's 'Forest Hymn.' We must read it together some day."

So they strolled along until they saw before them a glimmer of blue water.

"The lake should not be *there*," said Betty in puzzled tones; "we have been going away from it all the time."

They pressed forward until they stood in a fringe of birches which lined the edge of a dainty little lakelet.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried the girls, "it's a baby lake. Why have we never seen it before? Have we really discovered it?"

The little lake was hardly more than a pool. It lay there in the depths of the forest, its tiny waves breaking up against a beach of fairest sand. The great pines bent to screen it, while white birches tossed their snowy limbs and fluttered their green mantles close to the very edge.

"How beautiful!" said Miss Merriam, "and it makes one think of another poem, Lowell's 'Fountain of Youth':—

"'T is a woodland enchanted!  
The great August noonlight,  
Through myriad rifts slanted,  
Leaf and bole thickly sprinkles  
With flickering gold.'

"Then in another place it says:—

"' And o'er it  
A birch hangs delighted,  
Dipping, dipping, dipping its tremulous hair.'"

"What was the 'Fountain of Youth'?" asked Alice.

"It was only a fairy dream, dear. Long ago, people believed in this wonderful fountain in the forest. If one drank of it he could never grow old. So people made weary journeys to find it. Some grew old in the search, and died far from home."

"How sad!" said Betty, a shade creeping over her bright little face. "But our lake is so pretty, even to look at it makes one happy. Father says that a happy heart keeps us young. Alice, suppose we call our lake 'Lake Theodora,' for Miss Merriam?"

"That is very sweet in you," said their friend; "I shall be proud of my namesake."

"Now, at last," said Betty briskly, "we have something to keep from those boys. Won't it be nice, Alice, to steal away and enjoy it all ourselves?"

Alice's face clouded. "I was thinking — how much I should like to have Tom see it," she said, rather faintly.

"Oh, dear! dear! what shall I do with you?" said Betty, holding up her hands in comic dismay.

"I think you might keep it a secret for a while," said Miss Merriam. "Then we can plan a picnic here and invite the boys."

"But they'll make fun of it, and splash the

water, and *yell* like wild Indians," said Betty, with trembling lips.

"Don't worry, dear. I'll take care of that."



One afternoon, as they neared Lake Theodora, Betty said suddenly, "Why, what is that?"

Rocking on the waves was the daintiest, prettiest birch-bark canoe, all soft golden brown with a white stripe around the edge.

The pretty boat was tied to a birch trunk by a scarlet cord, and a slender paddle peeped over its edge. On the white stripe some letters were painted in black, —

“THE LADY BETTY.”

A slip of paper fluttered from the paddle. Betty seized it, and her face grew very red.

*“From those horrid boys”*

was inscribed in Dick’s most dashing hand.

Alice, meantime, was skipping up and down crying, “A canoe of your own, Betty! The boys made it! That is why they were away so much. They make lots of canoes at Camp Ellis. Oh, Betty! Oh, Betty!”

Meanwhile, in the bushes across the pool, three, nay, four pairs of sharp young eyes, were watching the scene.

“If you open your mouth I’ll—I’ll choke you!” whispered Dick sternly, burying poor Horace’s nose deeply in the mosses.

“She’s crying—Betty is,” said Tom, in awe-struck tones.

But there was one member of the party who simply could not keep still.

“Wow! wow!”

Alice turned pale, and even Miss Merriam started.

“Wow! wow!” went on the sharp voice. “\

tell you I won't keep still a minute longer. I hear my dear Alice. Where is she?"

"We might as well show up," said Dick, "Rags has given us away." So the lads arose from their hiding-place, and advanced to the water's edge, a smiling row.

"Is it Rags?" cried Alice. For reply Tom held up the little dog, who barked as if beside himself.

"We'll swim across," said Dick. "Betty, come over in your canoe and get this dog."

"Keep still, Rags," ordered Tom, as he dropped his friend on the canoe bottom.

"All right," said Rags. "I don't mind water, woods, or anything, now that I am with my family once more."

"Oh, you dearest doggie!" cried Alice, catching up her friend and hugging him. "How did you ever get here?"

"Hum!" replied the little dog, "I prefer that you should not inquire into my private affairs. But I do love you, Alice," and Rags kissed her vigorously.

When the boys reached shore, there was a torrent of exclamation. It was a confused mixture of canoe and dog, of thanks and inquiry.

"Well, Alice," said Tom, as soon as he could make himself heard above the noise, "it was this way. After we went, Rags just pined and pined, he missed us so. Then Uncle Will drove out.

He was going on to Uncle Fred's for a visit, then up here. After he had driven twenty miles he found Rags under the carriage seat. That cute little dog had guessed where he was going, so he hid himself away to go, too, — did n't you, Rags? Uncle Will brought him right along."

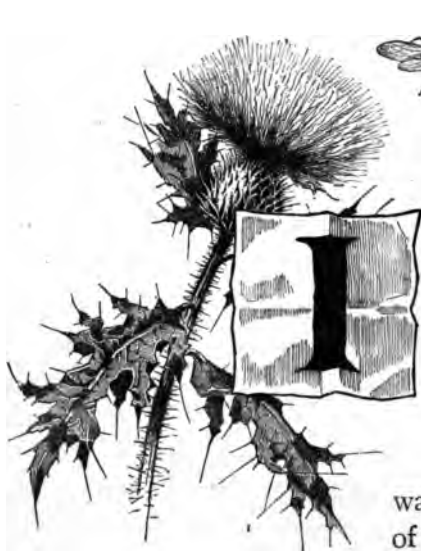
"Yes," barked Rags, "I came right along. I wish to be a good dog and mind my master, but there are some things flesh and blood cannot stand. I could not live without you, Alice and Tom. If Uncle Will had not brought me, I should have walked every step of the way. It is really very nice here. I don't mind these forest trees so much. Now that you have that pretty brown canoe for me, I shall not object to the water. I will drive away all the bad dogs. No bear shall come to this camp! Wow!"



## XXXVIII.—THE THISTLE

"Bright, bright, restless bright, through the sunburnt meads  
Wavers the butterfly :  
Ever across its path a pilot invisible leads  
A sylphid fleet of the thistle's light and feathery seeds, —  
And August passeth by."

EDITH M. THOMAS.



T was a beautiful day in late August. Already the leaves were reddening in the maple domes. Cardinal flowers stood up brave and ruddy beside the stream.

The sun shone warm upon the slope of the hillside pasture, but the breeze

was fresh and cool. In the dry, yellowing grasses thousands of little musicians were tuning their instruments.

Grasshoppers and crickets scraped their violins. Locusts pierced the silence with their sharp needle of sound.

Each little brown, green, or gray clad brother of the stubble did his part in the late summer chorus, which hinted of the coming autumn symphony.

Alice lay upon the ground gazing dreamily at the faint violet peaks rising in waves and crests against the cheek of the sky. She had come out by herself to look for milkweed pods. Her basket, nearly full, lay by her side.

She was rather tired and a bit sober. In a few days they were going home. It would be good to see the old faces and the loved places. But this life out of doors was so sweet, so free!

Why must the work-time draw near, with its puzzles for even little girls of eight? Alice drew a long sigh.

"Look out!" said a sharp voice, "you nearly blew me out of this thistle. You mortals are as bad as the wind."

Alice looked about, but saw no one save a great burly bee, grumbling among the purple thistle threads.

"Yes, I spoke," said the bee.

"I did n't know bees could talk," replied Alice, in great wonder.

"That proves how little you know, in spite of your size," said the bee saucily.

"I'm sure I'm very glad to find it out," replied the child humbly; "I've been learning something new every day."

"Now, I don't have to," remarked the bee complacently; "I know it all to begin with."

"I would rather find things out: surprises are such fun."

"That's the way you look at it," said the bee, loftily. "But then you can't help it, being only a mortal. Can you make honey?"

"No, but I can eat it."

"Do you have baskets in your hind legs? Can you pack them full with pollen?"

"Now see here, Sir Bee," said another voice; "I shall not allow you to treat my visitor so rudely. You are nearly drunk with the nectar you have taken from me. Off with you!"

"You're the stiffest old lady I ever saw, Madam Thistle. I shall not trouble you again."

"Oh, yes, you will! We thistles are the refuge of you great fellows after all else has failed. Go away, I tell you."

"I'm going: good-by, little girl. Good-by!" and Sir Bee flew, scolding, away.

"Can you talk, also?" cried Alice, looking up at the great thistle stalk bending over her.

"Everything in nature talks, but only a few mortals have the ears to hear," replied the thistle.

"But I understand you perfectly," said Alice, in great wonder.

"That is because you love us," said the thistle. "I knew it the minute you came here. You said, 'Oh, what a splendid thistle! I never saw such a big one.' Now a great many people would have added, 'What horrid spines!'"

"I can't say I like your spines," said Alice honestly. "I suppose you have good reason for growing them."

"Of course I have! If you knew my life, and all I have to contend with, you would not wonder."

"I should like very much to know. Whatever you have had to try you, you have been the one to come out ahead. I never saw so tall a thistle! Why, you are nearly three feet high."

"That's so," said the thistle, "and my spines are very strong."

"Why do you have them?"

"Well," replied the thistle, "I have a great objection to being eaten up. The cows graze in this pasture, and if I did not arm myself with these spines they would have me, sure! But I do not wish to live through the season for myself alone. I have some little seed-children to send out into the world. Every mother desires life for her children's sake."

"Why, of course," said Alice, "it is perfectly right to grow spines for protection. The roses do, and a good many other plants. You have a very pretty cluster of leaves close to the ground.

They spread out like a green rosette. Some of them must be nearly a foot long. I have seen these rosettes in the field without any stalk and blossoms. I have stepped on them when I was barefooted."

"I'm sorry, Alice, but we thistles must live. We are forced to be fighters. How do you like my leaf?"

"It is very curious. I see it is put on alternately, and grows shorter as it nears the top."

"Do you notice what a stout mid-rib it has? That is because my leaf is so long. I like to stand my leaves out, not let them droop. Everything in a thistle means pluck, endurance, firmness. We are the true warriors of the field."

"Your leaf reminds me a little of the dandelion's. It is cut in gashes, then it runs out in a set of points. The centre is the longest. Each point ends with a spine."

"If you look on the underside of the leaf, Alice, you will see that the spine is the mid-rib of the leaflet. It grows hard as it runs toward the end. It says to itself, 'I have two things to do. I must support my leaflet and make it stand out like a banner. I must also be a sharp little sword to protect my leaf.'"

"Your stalk is covered with little hairs, I see."

"Yes, I don't intend that any bugs shall come crawling up *me*. But my blossom, Alice,—that is my crown of joy."

"I don't wonder, Madam Thistle. It looks like a green jar swelling out at the sides and tapering toward the top. Mother has a vase shaped just like it. Your vase is crowded full with clusters of lovely purple threads. They are like silken fringes."

"If you will look into this vase, you will see a bunch of shorter threads in the centre. They are very white and silky. Pull out one of the purple threads and there will be a bunch of silky hairs clinging to it. By and by purple threads will push up through the white bunch of silky threads in the centre. My blossom will be beautiful then. It will be richer than a king's royal robe. It will be a perfect store-house of sweets. The bees will have a great feast then, I'm afraid."

"By and by my bright crown will fade and grow brown and dry. The winds of autumn will beat upon me. I shall spread my vase open wide, and out will fly a host of little winged creatures. Here is one now, Alice. I send it to you from this faded blossom of mine."

Something tickled Alice's cheek and she opened her eyes. She put up her hand and caught the visitor that Madam Thistle had sent to her. It was a little hard, flat seed-case of light yellow-brown. A withered thistle thread hung to it, and on either side were tufts of white silk.

"Alice, dear," said Miss Merriam just behind her, "what are you doing?"

"I suppose I've been asleep," said Alice; "at any rate Madam Thistle has been talking to me."

"What did she say?"

Alice repeated as best she could the message of the stately flower. Then Miss Merriam had her



observe the strong, sweet odor of the blossom. Alice also noticed that each silken thread of the seed-case was like a most dainty white feather.

"Fly away, thistle seeds," said Miss Merriam. "You have such pretty wings. Fly away until

you find some new home. Then sink into the brown earth and dream through winter hours. Let me whisper a wonderful secret. Some day, little seed, you shall be a flower. Is that not worth all the waiting and the dreaming?"

XXXIX.—THE SOUL OF A BUTTERFLY.

OVER the fields where the brown quail whistles,  
Over the ferns where the rabbits lie,  
Floats the tremulous down of a thistle:  
Is it the soul of a butterfly?

See how they scatter and then assemble,  
Filling the air while the blossoms fade,—  
Delicate atoms that whirl and tremble  
In the slanting sunlight that skirts the glade.

There goes the Summer's inconstant lover,  
Drifting and wandering faint and far,  
Only bewailed by the upland plover,  
Watched by only the evening star.

Come next August, when thistles blossom,  
See how each is alive with wings!  
Butterflies seek their souls in its bosom,  
Changed thenceforth to immortal things.

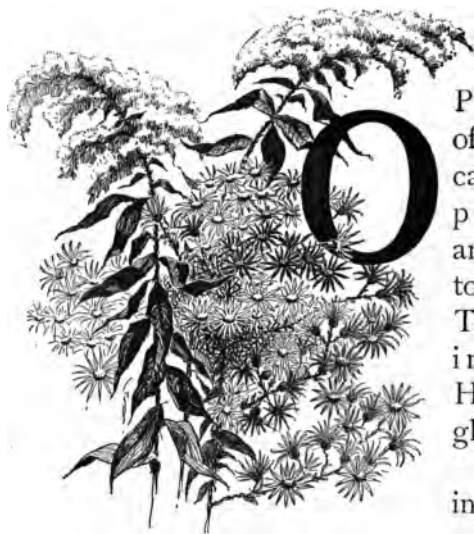
THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON.



## XL. — GOLDENROD AND ASTER

"Some gaudy prince has stayed here overnight :  
For, look ! the roadside gleams in splendor bright  
With gold-embroidered plumes that decked his train,  
While stars of purple amethyst, like rain,  
Have fallen from his robes."

JAMES BERRY BENSEL.



ONE day, after dinner, Uncle Philip made one of his sudden calls. He proposed a walk, and as Alice ran to get her hat Tom strolled into the yard. He was only too glad to go.

Alice was telling of the large number of little

ones who had joined the school that day. They were so sweet and loving.

Little Hubert Bell had run in school to kiss Miss Faith, who had come to assist Miss Merriam, " 'cause you 're so pretty," he said.

Ever so many had talked aloud, and Tina Mason had not been willing to go out at recess.

"I are a large girl now," she said. "I go to a truly school, and I must 'tudy my 'esson."

Dolly had told them all about it. Dolly was one of Miss Merriam's "big girls" now.

"We love the little ones," said Alice. "Each one of us had a little pupil for her own child. We would help it dress and play with it at recess, and give it things, and comfort it when it was hurt."

"That was a very good plan," said Uncle Philip, "very different from the one which ruled when I was a little shaver. The big children used to tease and hurt the little ones."

"How mean!" cried Alice indignantly; "our scholars would never think of such a thing. The grammar-school boys give the younger boys rides on their double-runners and bicycles, and play ball with them sometimes."

"If I saw a big fellow punch a little one I'd — I'd punch him," said Tom, his big eyes darkening.

"I like that spirit," said Uncle Phil; "it is manly to care for and protect the weak. The savage races had no idea of this. But as fast as people get civilized they see that they must be gentle as well as strong. That's what is meant by the 'brotherhood of man' we hear so much about in church. Do you know, children, that there is

something very like this among animals and plants?

"When the buffaloes on the plains are attacked by wolves, they put the mothers and little ones in the centre. Then the males form a ring around them and fight.

"There are sister bees who spend all their time caring for the baby bees.

"I have known of winged mother-ants who bite off their own wings when their little ones come from the egg. These wings would be in the way, so they give up flying through love for their young."

"But you said 'plants,' too," cried Alice eagerly.

"Yes, and I can show you about it now just as well as not. Suppose we sit down on this bank. Tom, get me the finest plume of goldenrod you can, roots and all. Alice, select the same of large, purple asters."

The children came running back in a few moments with what Uncle Philip had desired.

"We'll take the aster first. Tell me about the roots, Alice."

"They are thread-like," said Alice.

"There's a large, thick root in the centre of the threads running sideways," said Tom.

"Why are there these two forms, Alice?"

"The little ones reach out and get food from the soil," said Alice, "but I don't know what the large root is for."

"The large root keeps the plant steady. The goldenrod has one, too. It is so tall it needs more support than the thread-like roots can give it," said Tom, who often thought deeper than Alice.

"Here at your hand is an example of working together, and of helpfulness. The big root says to the little ones, 'Spread out and get all the food you can. I am so big and strong I'll keep the plant erect.'

"Look at the aster-star: how many kinds of flowers do you see there?"

"I see yellow things in the centre, and purple petals all about the edge," replied Alice.

"Look at the yellow things; what are they like?"

Alice was silent for a moment, then said: "As nearly as I can make out, they are like tubes."

"That is so, and each tube is a flower in itself. There are hundreds of these tube-like flowers in a head together. One such tube-flower would make no show at all by itself. 'In union there is strength,' you know.

"What you call petals are not petals at all, but rays. We might speak of them as the big sisters of the little yellow flowers. Now what do you suppose they do for their wee sisters?"

"Oh, what?" cried Alice, with dancing eyes.

"They are just silken flags, hung out to tell the bees that there is honey for sale in the yellow tubes. When the bees come with their pollen-

covered thighs and pay for honey with pollen, don't you suppose the whole family is glad?"

"I can see the two kinds of flowers in the goldenrod," said Tom, who had been looking keenly at the bright plume.

"We call such family flowers as goldenrod and aster 'composite' flowers. Can you think of any others?"

"There's the daisy and sunflower," replied Alice.

"Yes,—and the yellow daisy with a brown centre," added Tom.

"You mean the rudbeckia, or Black-eyed Susan. There's something very pretty about the daisy. If a sudden storm comes, the white rays fold above the yellow flowers in the centre like a little tent. You see how anxious the kind sister rays are to protect the smaller flowers," said Uncle Philip.

"We are going to study the aster and goldenrod in school this week. I shall remember all you have told us. How is it you get such beautiful ideas from the birds and flowers?"

"Because I love them," said Mr. Lansing. "They are my little brothers and sisters. The same God who is my Father is their Father, too, and cares for them with equal love.

"So, when I study a plant or animal, I think not only how curious or beautiful it is, but how much love and care is shown in it."

"Everything is beautiful," said Alice, as she


looked over the peaceful landscape fast gaining its autumn tints. "Miss Merriam showed us some dry leaves last year. After we had talked about them, and noticed the color and the curves, they no longer seemed ugly."

"And the oyster-shell they had in the grammar classes," added Tom; "don't you remember how many colors they found in it?"

"Look at little sorrel," said Uncle Phil. "What a glowing crimson some of her leaves have turned! There is a wealth of color in even the humblest weeds, if we will but stoop to look."

Alice went home with her head full of new thoughts, so many lessons had come in one day.

A new world had been opened to her, not of beauty alone, but of love and care in the humblest wayside flower. After this the stately goldenrod and tender-eyed aster would be more than flowers to her. They would be friends,—a part of that toiling, loving sisterhood to which she, too, by nature belonged.



## XLI.—THE WALK TO CHESTNUT RIDGE

"The chestnuts, lavish of their long-hid gold,  
To the faint Summer, beggared now and old,  
Pour back the sunshine hoarded 'neath her favoring eye."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.



"HY are you eating so fast, dear?" said Mr. Pryor. "Is it only 'ten minutes for refreshments'?"

"You see it is Saturday and we are going nutting," explained Alice.

"I wish I were going, too," and Mr. Pryor tried to look sober. "It would be

ever so much more interesting than dealing in hides and leather all day long."

"It is n't fair for me to have so much play-time

and you so little," and Alice's bright face grew anxious.

"Now, don't look like that, sweetheart. I've had my play-time, and now must work like the rest of the grown-up world. You'll be there soon enough, my dear one."

"Poor dear little father," said Alice, patting his shoulder.

"Bring home some autumn sunshine for me," said Mr. Pryor, as he rose from the table and looked at the clock.

Alice ran to him and gave him a good hugging.

"Be a good boy to-day, father dear," she said.

"I'll try," said Mr. Pryor, kissing the tip of her nose.

It was a glorious day, bright with the clear autumn sunshine and glowing with color. Maples were blazing in scarlet and gold. The birches were clad in pale amber, while the chestnuts looked very stylish in rich yellow-brown.

Near the schoolhouse stood great oaks,—domes of terra-cotta red or brown, every leaf most exquisitely colored.

Goldenrod waved her plumes by the roadside, or crowded the little hollows in thick ranks. From the thickets, asters gleamed like gentle eyes that mourned summer's departure. Everlasting opened her white, golden-hearted clusters.

Sumac stood gorgeous in fiery crimson with



great cones of golden-brown berries. Woodbine clambered over wall and hedgerow like a trail of flame, while mountain-ash held out pretty clusters of light red.

Upon every breeze arose hosts of dainty, light-winged creatures. The heralds of Madam Thistle hurried along on tufts of gossamer. Milkweed birds showed their brown breasts and snowy pinions.

The clematis shook off her foam-like down. A little later, and goldenrod and aster would join the carnival of the winds.

Clover, sunburned little gypsy maid, was still loitering by the way; and here and there shone the pale-blue stars of the chiccory.

The children ran down the streets in high spirits. West Wind called to them from the pines, where he played sweet melodies on their slender harpstrings. Now he bent the heads of tall grasses in the fields—autumn's aftermath: or shouted from the maples, whose gaudy banners quivered in his embrace.

By the time the schoolhouse was reached, at least twenty children were in the party. They walked through the woods, as they had done on Alice's birthday. Fallen leaves carpeted the path, and tall ferns, bleached to the palest yellow, peered at them from the shadows.

Just before reaching Mr. Rolf's glen they turned into a path leading around the base of Hancock

Hill. Rags went ahead barking to ward off the bears and bad dogs. Once in a while he left the party to chase a wild rabbit, or stir up a partridge. It was a great day for him.

Presently they came upon a stream which dashed and foamed over the jagged rocks. The ravine grew narrower. Great hills rose on either side. The warm, bright air grew suddenly chill, and the stream murmured hoarsely below.

The children walked along in silence as the hills closed about them. It was so still, so far removed from the haunts of men! Yet the heart of a great city beat only a few miles away.

At last they came out into a sunny field which sloped to the road below. The children gave a great shout and raced down the hill. Some of them rolled down, very much alarming the little autumn grasshoppers and crickets in the stubble.

After crossing the road they climbed a stone wall and mounted another slope. Above them, on a high ridge, stood a row of great chestnuts rustling in golden robes.

From the ridge a beautiful view of the next town, with its twin lakes, was spread out before them. After the children had gained the top, they sat down to rest.

## XLII. — WITH ROBIN HOOD

“Come where the horns are blowing,  
Come to the merry greenwood,  
Come, gentle lords and ladies,  
To sport with Robin Hood.”

OLD SONG.

AS they sat there, the sound of voices came to them, and they saw caps gleaming among the bushes.

Walter Carter gave a groan, and said, loudly and rudely, “Some of those Hazeldale roughs! I believe they’ll try to get up a fight. I should n’t think they would come hanging round where no one wants them.”

A lad of twelve or thirteen came out of the bushes and looked at them with steady eyes.

“I heard what you said,” he remarked coolly. “We *are* from Hazeldale school. But we are not ‘roughs,’ if you mean by that disorderly boys. We have come for chestnuts, as I suppose you have. If there is any fight, we shall not be the ones to start it. Now what have you to say?”

Walter had nothing to say; he had no excuse for his rudeness.

“Who gave *you* permission to come on this land anyway?” went on the boy, coming a step nearer.



"It is none of your business," retorted Walter.

"It *is* my business," replied the lad. "This land belongs to my father, Mr. Waterbury."

"I don't believe it," said Walter saucily.

The boy stepped back and raised a toy bugle to his lips. Its note was answered by a shout, and boys came bursting upon the scene. Boys, boys, everywhere; from the bushes, from behind rocks and trees, from the tall grass. They seemed to rise from the very ground itself. They stood about their leader armed with stout sticks, and scowling at the intruders.

"What is it, Master?" said one little fellow, keen of face and dark of eye.

"Have these impudent strangers dared insult your worship?"

"One has, indeed, my gallant Allan A'Dale," replied the lad.

"Does he deserve the death?"

A sudden light broke upon Guy's mind. He stepped forward and took off his cap, bowing low.

"Brave Robin Hood," he said earnestly, "please pardon him. He did not know your worship. The rest of our party do not feel as he does. We came to get nuts. But if we intrude upon your domain, we will go. It will be hard lines, for we have come far; still, we will go."

A frank smile lit Robin Hood's face, and he held out his hand graciously. Guy sank upon one knee and kissed it.

"Rise, noble stranger," said the chief; "I welcome you all to our merry-making. Will Loxley, stand forth!"

A slender, sunburned lad, with roguish eye, sprang to his chief's side.

"My trusted lieutenant. What hither, Will Scarlet!"

A jolly little fellow, grinning from ear to ear, tripped to the other side.

"Friar Tuck!" A roly-poly lad, nearly as broad as he was long, came sheepishly forward.

"These are my good men, a score all told," said Robin Hood, waving his hand toward the crowd. "We do not lead the chase to-day. The red deer may lie low in his leafy covert: he shall not be disturbed.

"We have come, like you, for nuts. The field is wide, and there are nuts enough for all.

"What ho, my gallant men! Climb up and beat down the nuts for these fair ladies."

The merry men sprang up in the trees and began beating and shaking. The nuts, in their rough burs, came tumbling down. Rags barked, and it was all very exciting.

"How queer they are!" whispered Mollie to Alice as they stood aside watching the scene.

"They are just playing," said Alice. "Don't you remember that the grammar pupils read 'Robin Hood' last year? I think that boy is just splendid!"

It was such fun, gathering nuts in the golden October weather! Jack Frost had cracked many of the burs, so there was little trouble in getting at the plump, brown contents.

Rags bustled about, advising every one, until he stepped on a large bur. The pain drove him away to a quiet place, where he sat down, ruefully licking his foot.

Robin Hood looked at it carefully and pressed out a long chestnut spine.

"Better stay here, little dog," he said, patting him kindly.

At lunch they all sat together on the grass and opened their baskets. Robin Hood and his men sat with them. They exchanged sandwiches and doughnuts, as if they had known one another all their lives.

After dinner they rested, while Robin Hood told the most stirring tales of adventure and hair-breadth escape. The younger children were much impressed, but the older boys and girls had read it all before from a favorite book.

In the afternoon they were taken to the "merry green wood," and shown the haunts of the chief and his men. There were the bowers, made of hemlock branches and carpeted with moss, where the men were supposed to sleep. There was an open space used as a council hall, with a great rock as a throne.

The boys had made a rude table and benches

from some weather-worn boards "taken from the king's own stables," as Robin Hood gravely informed them.

There was a gloomy cavern, "where they repaired in times of great danger." As it could hold perhaps three or four lads by dint of much squeezing, it must have been a cherished refuge.

Robin Hood led them to a tiny pond of water surrounded by dark forest trees.

"This is a bottomless pool," he said hoarsely, "and here we plunge all traitors to our just cause."

"How many times have you done it?" inquired Alice with twinkling eyes.

"Ask me not, fair lady," replied the chief, turning aside to hide his emotion.

Just then a bugle sounded from the path ahead.

"'Tis he, — the King's officer, sent to apprehend us," cried Robin Hood. "Flee, my men, — flee, my guests! Save these fair ladies first."

The children scattered as by magic. Some climbed the trees, some hid in the bushes, or lay with beating hearts in the evergreen tangles.

A panting lad who had been posted as watchman came rushing down the path shouting, "He comes! save yourselves!"

It seemed very real, although the children knew it to be but play. In a moment the district police strolled by. He was a fat, good-humored old fellow, whom the children knew and liked.



He looked from side to side with a broad grin, and well he might grin. Alice's hat was in plain sight among the bushes, and the noble chief's red belt was a bit of color against a white-birch stem.

Davison's face grew as wrinkled as a baked apple with his smiling. He trudged on, chuckling to himself.

When the great peril was past, Robin Hood blew his bugle and gathered his trusty men again. Then began a remarkable dancing to the music of one or two combs and a rickety jewsharp.

Alice thought those boys would actually wriggle off their arms and legs. The spirit seized them all. The visitors joined in, even the girls catching up their frocks and skipping into the circle.

They danced until they could dance no more, dropping one by one on the pine needles, simply worn out. Robin Hood was the last to stop. "'T is a general thanksgiving for our great deliverance," he said gravely.

Rags sat upon the throne with an approving smile. As usual, he thought it all for his benefit.

But the long, bright day drew to a close, as all days must.

"How late it is!" said Lesley. "We must start for home, as we shall have to go around by road."

"I cannot allow you to depart without refreshment," said Robin Hood. "A half mile hence lives a trusty vassal of mine, Sir Herbert Water-

bury. He and his lady bid our guests break bread with them. After the feast, I myself and Sir Herbert's henchman will drive you home in the hay-rigging."

"But our mothers,—they will worry," said Lesley.

"Leave it in my hands," said Robin Hood graciously. "A trusty varlet riding to the mail hath scattered the news in your manor."

At the Waterbury house long tables had been spread in both dining-room and kitchen. Mrs. Waterbury, assisted by two smiling maids, flew about, filling cups and offering stacks of bread and butter, cake and cold fowl, to the hungry children.

Rags sat in a high chair at Robin Hood's right hand, a napkin pinned about his neck. On the left was a splendid black cat with large yellow eyes. Tiffins had so stately and dignified an appearance that Rags did not venture to bark at him.

During supper Robin Hood vanished, and it was only Rex Waterbury who laughed and chatted with his guests.

Tom looked at him with the greatest admiration. He noticed the firm mouth and keen yet pleasant eye. He felt the power which made him leader of so many other restless lads. Tom would have been willing to follow also.

At last the hay-rigging stood at the door, and

the laughing children clambered in. A great golden moon was rising over the hills and shining down upon the harvest fields. It smiled upon them all the way.

It had been a charming time, and the baskets of nuts were the least of the treasures they had brought home. At last only three lads remained in the rigging.

"Good-night; come again," said Rex pleasantly as Guy, Walter, and Norman jumped out over the tail-board.

But Walter lingered.

"I was a donkey to you to-day," he said in a low tone.

"Never mind," said Rex hastily; "I'm glad you see that we Hazeldale fellows are not quite savages."

"But I apologize."

"'T is forgotten," said Robin Hood graciously. "Good-night again."

The boys listened as the rumble of the hay-rigging died away in the distance; then they turned homeward.

"Is n't he a brick?" said Walter eagerly. I will not repeat the answer. But any one who knows boys may guess.

### XLIII. — BIRDS OF PASSAGE



" With mingled sound of horns and bells,  
A far-heard clang, the wild geese fly,  
Storm-sent, from Arctic moors  
and fells,  
Like a great arrow through  
the sky."

JOHN G. WHITTIER.



THE children did not realize it, but already their little friends the birds were stealing away to their winter homes. How quiet was this leave-taking!

First, that little winged rainbow of the flowers, ruby-throated humming-bird, drifted toward the Southland. One day they saw him dipping his long beak into the morning-glory cups, as breezy and cheerful as ever. In twenty-four hours he had vanished and the garden knew him no more.

The gleams of orange and black, that had flitted restlessly among the elm-boughs all summer, now suddenly ceased. Only the wind-swept cradles were left to tell the tale of the baby orioles that had been rocked to sleep there many a summer night.

Where was Mr. Bobolink, all chatter and importance? Where was that once jolly fellow now

“Sober with work and silent with care”?

All summer long, the restless swallows had darted in and out of the old barns, never quiet, always on the wing. The day came when a sudden stillness told the story. The thrushes warbled sweet farewells about the porch and through orchard ways; then one listened in vain for their silver carols. Troops of autumn birds from the far north made their brief visits and then departed.

Alice and Tom often saw great flocks of cheerful little fellows darkening some wayside tree, or perched in long rows on fence or telephone wire. The next day they would be gone.

Robins, so bold and talkative through the spring and early summer, became suddenly silent. They were now more often seen in flocks, as if preparing for flight.

As the leaves fell, the shriek of the bluejay was heard in the grove where in spring days the woodpecker tapped briskly for his mate. Flocks of chickadees, all in gray overcoats and jaunty black caps, pecked among the wayside weeds.

Great glossy crows walked about over the bare fields as if the earth were theirs, and man but a willing servant.

One night Tom lay awake with a bad toothache. After midnight the pain ceased. Tom pillowed

his cheek upon a hot-water bag, and felt that at last he might be able to sleep.

Mrs. Bennett was lowering the window before going to her own room.

"What is that noise?" said Tom, suddenly starting up in bed.

Outside, the air seemed filled with a hoarse clank and clangor. Mrs. Bennett opened the window and listened.

"It must be the wild geese going over," she said.

"Oh, I want to see them," cried Tom, forgetting toothache and all. "I *must* see them, mother! Such a chance does n't come every day."

Mrs. Bennett bundled up Tom in an afghan, and held him on her lap at the open window.

It was a dark night, — even the stars were hidden. The restless autumn winds were silent, and the only sound that came to them was that hoarse cry from overhead.

It was a sound which made even sturdy, sensible Tom creep a little closer to his mother. It was a confused mixture of voices, as if some were urging and others objecting. There was the clash of arms, as of foe meeting foe; the shout of those who won, and the sullen groan of the conquered.

"Come, little lad," said Mrs. Bennett, closing the window as the last hoarse note died away. "This is a strange performance when some one has been almost crying from toothache all night."

"I don't care," replied Tom sturdily; "it was worth hearing, and I don't believe my teeth will ache any more for it, either. Were the geese flying at night because they were afraid to go in the daytime?"

"Perhaps so," replied Mrs. Bennett; "still, I have often noticed flocks in the daytime. If you watch to-morrow you may see one."

Tom cuddled the water-bag to his still sensitive face, and fell asleep to dream of the wild, hoarse crying.

A few days after, a flock actually passed over the schoolhouse while the children were out at recess. They gazed up at the great black arrow traveling through the sky.

The strong-winged birds were higher up than when Tom had heard them, but one could distinctly make out that strange battle-cry.

"They have come from Arctic moors," said Miss Harris, "driven away doubtless by some sudden storm. When we see them in this climate it is a pretty sure sign that winter is at hand. They always move in that position, and have a leader or commodore, whom they obey strictly."

"How do they know which way to go?" asked Bessie.

"There is a voice within them which tells them to go and points out the way. The tiniest warbler may travel all those miles of air from Northland to Southland and not miss the way. But

not all the birds that start on the winter passage reach the Southern rivers and orange groves. Sudden storms overtake and bewilder them. The hunters lie in wait for them. Some of them see the lights in the lighthouse and dash themselves against the glass. The next morning there will often be scores of pretty creatures lying dead on the sand below.

“ But this is the sad side, and there is a brighter one. Thousands of little songsters find their way in perfect safety to the old orchards where they were born, or where they built last year. The same birds often build in the same places year after year.


“ We know that March will bring the first blue-bird, and that, when wake-robin opens in the low meadows, many more of our little feathered friends will have appeared.”



## XLIV.—JACK FROST HAS HIS WAY

"Then every morn the river's banks shine bright  
With smooth plate-armor treacherous and frail,  
By the frost's clinking hammers forged at night."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.



**A**LICE wandered out into the garden, and looked disappointed at the blackened beds and ruined borders. Only yesterday she had plucked a fine bouquet to carry to her teacher.

Now, where hardy asters had nodded in brave bright ranks, there were only withered stalks sparkling with hoar frost, and poor, blighted blossoms. The sweet-peas were no more. Here and there, a bit of mignonette or candy-tuft remained to tell the tale of the garden's former glory.

Where were the stiff, gaudy dahlias bristling with pride? Where were the hollyhocks, haunt of the bustling bee? Only a brief while before,

nasturtium blew his trumpet from the piazza railing, and scarlet salvia lit garden ways with her flaming torch.

Now all was blackness and desolation ; darkness for rainbow tint, and decay for warm, summer beauty.

" Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! all the flowers are gone," cried Alice. " I do love winter, but I hate to have my lovely pets die. I know you, you Jack Frost ! I know your little, cold hands that nip and sting."

Every fallen leaf had an edge of cold white spangles. Every grass-blade stood up clad in a robe of glistening down. Even the fence-rails were stiff with icy points and scales.

The air was full of little needles, and the sun, " a blood-red orange," looked dimly through the ice-charged atmosphere.

Alice shivered a little : where was all the summer brightness ? Where was the sweet, peaceful autumn sunshine that had made the long, bright days so full of golden promise ?

She wandered down into a sheltered corner where the bee-hives stood in a row. A cry of joy came from the little girl. There, just before her, was a great clump of marigolds, as yet spared by Jack's cruel hands.

There they stood, the gorgeous growing blossoms ! Some were yellow as gold, others a deep sunny brown with yellow crimped borders.

" You dear things !" cried Alice. " You dear,

brave things! I am going to pick you and carry you to school. Miss Harris will fill the great peacock-blue jar, and you'll be a fine sight for a dull day."

Alice's hands did quick work, and she ran into the house with as many as she could carry.

"Autumn sunshine!" said Mr. Pryor as he met her in the hall.

"That is a good name for them," said the child, hugging her burden closer.

"I meant something else as well," replied Mr. Pryor, smiling, as he looked at the happy little face.

On the board at school was a pretty sketch of a laughing little sprite stealing through a clump of flowers and striking them with his slender wand.

"Is that Jack Frost?" inquired Tom.

"I meant it for him," replied Miss Harris, "and to-day we will talk of his capers."

After the lesson the pupils were asked to write some stories about lively Jack.

Charlotte Hale, one of the older class children, was noted for her pretty tales. Charlotte intended writing a book at some future time.

Here is her story:—

#### A CHAT WITH LIVELY JACK.

I was on my way to school one morning, when whom should I meet but Jack Frost. He was a

lively little fellow, in a cap and coat of ice span-gles.

He held a long ice-wand, tipped with a star. His sharp eyes were like gimlets, and seemed to go through me.

"How do you do, Jack?" I said.

"Glad to see you," he said, giving me such a nip I almost cried.

"I don't like you, Jack," I said. "You are very unkind."

"Why?" he asked.

"You kill all my flowers, and just now you hurt me."

"You are like all other mortals," said Jack. "You forget the pleasant things and remember only what you don't enjoy. What if I *do* kill the flowers? Is n't it time for them to go to sleep? Suppose the leaves *do* fall? If you had worked as busily as a tree all summer, you would be glad to rest through winter days.

"How about the pictures on your window-panes, — castles, bridges, forests, and winding streams? If it were not for me, would you have them? How about the crust I put over the river? I suppose you don't care for sliding and skating!

"There are some countries where I never go. The people there are too tired ever to work. Disease runs away wherever I come. I may put the flowers to sleep, but I also kill the little things

— I believe they call them germs — that make illness and death. I make the blood run faster. I make people work. Am I so bad a fellow? ”

“ Oh, no, Jack,” I said. “ You are really a very good fellow, only please don’t shake hands with me again.”

As the days went on, Jack Frost had his will more and more. Soon not a garden flower remained.

Even little late Clover gave up the struggle and fell by the way. The last frost flower tucked up its toes and went to bed.

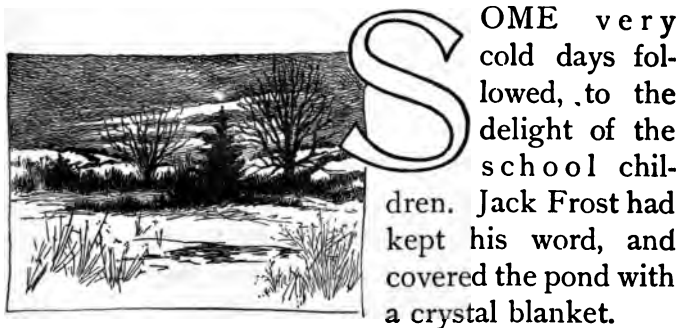
The leaves fell thicker and thicker, until only the gaunt, bare branches were left to tell of all the summer bower and shade.

The hoar frost lay thicker each morn upon the yellow stubble. Summer was far away. Even Autumn had vanished and white-headed Winter stood at the door.

## XLV. — THE FIRST SNOW-FALL

“ Out of the bosom of the air,  
Out of the cloud-folds of her garments shaken,  
Over the woodlands brown and bare,  
Over the harvest fields forsaken,  
Silent and soft and slow  
Descends the snow.”

H. W. LONGFELLOW.



SOME very cold days followed, to the delight of the school children. Jack Frost had kept his word, and covered the pond with a crystal blanket.

Every morning the larger boys tested the ice, saying hopefully to one another, “Guess it will bear to-morrow: don’t you think so?”

Skates were carefully sharpened, and the skies watched most anxiously. The interest in the thermometer must have gratified the Clerk of the Weather, had that wise old gentleman been aware of it.

Alice got out her fur-trimmed jacket and hood,

and even thought seriously of wearing two pairs of mittens.

Rags pretended to be very much afraid of her squirrel muff, and barked violently when it appeared.

"Rags!" said Tom severely, "don't you know the difference between live things and things that are dead?"

"Oh, my!" barked Rags, very much crestfallen. "So we dogs can't have our little jokes, eh?"

About this time Rags came out in a blanket that was the envy of all his mates. It was of bright red cashmere, lined and wadded, and trimmed with rosettes of black satin ribbon.

The first day he wore it he trotted proudly along, looking neither to the right nor left. He would not speak to any of his friends, but held his nose high in the air in foolish pride.

The next day, however, he must have had better thoughts, for he was his old friendly self. He even invited several little dogs to the house, and shared his choice bones with them.

The cold weather continued, and at last the pond was pronounced safe. Then there came such a carnival of skating and sliding as the town had never before seen.

Boys got up early and went without their breakfasts for the sake of an extra "skate." Girls hurried their practicing in order to go around the pond once or twice before school.

One long recess Miss Faith took her little ones over, and the older children drew them about on sleds or ice-chairs which the boys had rigged.

Every afternoon the ice was covered with gay figures, and every evening bonfires blazed there, and the shouts of the skaters could be heard until nearly midnight.

As you may readily guess, lessons suffered somewhat among the older pupils. But the teachers were patient: they knew it was a fine, healthful sport, and such a glorious chance did not occur every year.

Great games of hockey were played on the ice, and some of the gentlemen left their business early to enjoy the Canadian game of "curling." If you don't know what that is, ask your teacher, who surely will.

One Saturday, when the whole school was on the ice, the sound of a bugle came from the upper end of the pond. Robin Hood and his men dashed down among them, and they had another exciting time together.

In all, there were ten or a dozen days of skating; then the weather suddenly grew milder.

"I believe it's going to snow," said Tom, looking up into the dull gray sky.

"Oh! I'm almost sorry," cried Alice. "I did hope for one more day on the ice."

"It was not much good yesterday," said Tom. "It was getting almost sloshy. Now, if we can



only have snow enough for good coasting, won't it be jolly!"

When school was half over, Percy, who had glanced up at the window, cried, "Hurrah! it's snowing!"

How the faces brightened! Some of the excited children laughed aloud. Miss Faith's little ones were so happy that they could think of nothing else but the lovely, feathery flakes.

At recess, every child in the building was out trying to catch the white wonders. Some held up dark cloths and watched the pretty shapes as they floated down.

There were snowflakes like feathers and snowflakes like ferns. Others had three sides, some six, and some were like tiny stars.

The grammar-school children had their magnifying-glasses to hold over the flakes. Guy made a hasty sketch of one in his note-book and brought it to Mr. Minot.

Many of the younger children ran home and pulled out their sleds, expecting a coast that very day.

## II

Alice and Tom played out in the snow until five o'clock. It fell so thick and fast that they made snowballs and pelted one another and Rags, who enjoyed the fun as well as any one.

Of course the small dog barked at the falling flakes; it was a plain duty. But the little white

feathers came down as briskly as ever, notwithstanding.

After Alice was called in and had changed her damp skirts, she knelt by the window and gazed out into the white world. The air was full of whirling flakes. Some rode fast and furiously, others sailed down with stately grace.

The trees were covered with ermine; hardly a naked twig could be seen. The flower-beds on the lawn lost their outlines, and the whole surface became one uniform sheet of white.

A flock of chickadees settled on the syringa-bush, shaking away the flakes and searching for seeds. Alice ran for some crumbs and scattered them over the snow.

The birds flew joyously down and ate as only hungry birds will. Alice saw their tiny foot-prints, which the ever busy snowflakes sought to cover.

She watched them gradually disappear, and then said to herself, "I am really sleepy. It's the warm room, after being out in the cold."

"*We* are never sleepy," said a tiny voice.

Alice jumped up eagerly, for on the other side of the pane a group of snow fays were tapping.

"Come out, Alice, and have a ride," they called impatiently; "the great swan will not wait."

The next moment she found herself in the thick of the storm. A crowd of little elves pressed about her, danced up and down, clapped their hands, and gave every sign of joy.

"Now we've got her, darling Alice! More of you to the left! Steady, now!" they cried, in fine, sweet voices.

"Why, I'm not cold one bit," she said, in great surprise.

"Of course you're not," chorused the snow fays; "snow is the warmest blanket in the world. Does n't Mother Nature use it to cover her most precious secrets during the winter? But when you ride on the swan you'll be warmer still. There he is! Steady now!"

Alice found herself on the back of a great white bird, whose downy plumage rose up about her with the most delightful warmth. Away they went, some of the snow fays clustering on either side, others flying in advance to clear the way.

"Where are we going?" asked Alice.

"Wherever you like, Sweetheart," said the great bird.

"I should like to go to Greenland and see Agoonack, if it is not too far."

"We'll have you there in a very short time."

Alice had never had such a delicious feeling as that which the ride with the snowflakes gave her. It was like floating on the softest sea, yet it had all the freedom of the bird's motion.

The snowflakes about her changed into all kinds of shapes. Sometimes they were clusters of fairy-like blossoms. Then they were flocks of white birds who sang her sweet melodies and

then flitted away. They were curious shapes, that changed every moment.

The snow fairies told her stories of the dancing water-drop sisters who were scattered into fragile mist fays by the great sun. They whispered the secrets of the mystic change from vapor to frost, from rain to hail and snow.

It seemed so simple, even if wonderful, and Alice longed to remember it all to carry home to mother.

"Look below, Alice, if you wish to see Agoonack," said the white bird.

The snowflakes had disappeared, and the sky was a dark yet clear blue. Overhead the great stars sparkled. Down below, a short, fat, fur-covered figure was running toward a sledge drawn by little brown dogs.

"O Agoonack, darling!" cried Alice, stretching out her arms.

"Come to supper, dear," said Mr. Pryor, raising Alice from the floor, where she had fallen.

"Have I come back from riding with the snow elves?" asked Alice, rubbing her eyes.

"You seem here in the body, but I think your mind is still away," laughed Mr. Pryor, pinching one rosy cheek. "Have you been with little Kay at the Snow Queen's feet?"

"Well, it was the most real dream!" persisted Alice.

## XLVI.—THE CHRISTMAS SILENCE



HUSHED are the  
pigeons cooing  
low  
On dusty rafters of  
the loft ;  
And mild-eyed oxen,  
breathing soft,  
Sleep on the fragrant  
hay below.

Dim shadows in the  
corner hide ;  
The glimmering lan-  
tern's rays are  
shed  
Where one young  
lamb just lifts  
his head,  
Then huddles  
against his mo-  
ther's side.

Strange silence tingles in the air ;  
Through the half-open door a bar  
Of light from one low-hanging star  
Touches a baby's radiant hair.

No sound: the mother, kneeling, lays  
Her cheek against the little face.  
Oh human love! Oh heavenly grace!  
'Tis yet in silence that she prays!

Ages of silence end to-night;  
Then to the long-expectant earth  
Glad angels come to greet His birth  
In burst of music, love, and light!

MARGARET DELAND.



## XLVII.—THE WINTER WOODS

"The snowbird twittered on the beechen bough;  
And 'neath the hemlock, whose thick branches bent  
Beneath its bright, cold burden, and kept dry  
A circle on the earth of withered leaves,  
The partridge found a shelter. Through the snow  
The rabbit sprang away "

BRYANT.

**A**LICE sat by the fire buried in her favorite, "Alice in Wonderland." The March Hare and the Hatter were just stuffing the Dormouse into the teapot, when a sharp tap came on the window.

Uncle Phil in golf suit and Miss Merriam in bicycle dress were outside. Tom stood smiling between them. Alice ran, laughing, to the door.

"Come, Alice!" said Uncle Phil, "scramble into that wonderful snow suit of yours. We are going into the woods."

Alice ran joyfully away, returning as a comical little figure in blue reefer, mittens, and leggings. Over her skirts she had drawn a pair of bright red woolen snow-drawers. With the tucked-in skirts, Alice was more like a fat Dutch boy than an American maiden. A red cap with bobbing tassel was drawn over her head.

All the party buckled on snowshoes and



skimmed over the fleecy whiteness like so many wild birds. Rags cried mournfully from the barn chamber as they flew past.

Frida's mother saw them, and thought to herself, "Mrs. Pryor is bringing up Alice just like a boy. How can she let her go out on such a freezing day and before the roads are broken?"

But Alice sped on, unknowing. Sometimes, in her eagerness to outdo Tom, she would trip herself up with the points of her snowshoes. There would be a desperate wallowing in the drifts, as if a red and blue puppy were scrambling about. Then Uncle Phil would pull her out, and set her on her feet panting and glowing, with mouth full of snow, yet laughing like a crazy little elf.

They stopped to rest on a high ridge overlooking miles of pleasant country. At the right, the horizon's edge showed a sparkling strip of blue flecked with white sails. In front rose the spires of a great city, and beyond a range of purple hills. A few crows were walking along the edge of the river, black dots against the intense whiteness.

"What a white, white world!" said Miss Merriam, "and how the snow covers up and makes equal all things!"

"Yes," replied Uncle Phil; "that old gravel-pit and stony field of Uncle William's are as softly curving, as full of dimpling hollows, as 'Mary's Meadow.' It is like the rain on the 'just and the unjust.'"

"Please, what do you mean?" said Tom, who must always have everything made plain.

"Just this," replied Uncle Phil kindly: "Nature gives everything a chance. She cares for the burdock as well as the lily, and the snake equally with the noble, intelligent horse."

"Well, I don't see any use in three things,—snakes, English sparrows, and mosquitoes," said Tom decidedly.

"I know the sparrows are quarrelsome and drive our sweet song-birds away," said Alice. "When people talk of killing them I feel glad; but then the baby sparrows are so pretty! The brown is so bright, and their breasts are so soft and gray, and I like that white ring about their necks. Somehow, I cannot help liking them a little. How do you think we ought to feel?"

"Oh, don't ask *me*," said her uncle, laughing. "Let us leave such questions to the wise men, and take up our tramp again."

They passed from the open field to the shelter of the woods. Outside, a keen, brisk wind had been blowing. Within, it was calm and still. Not a breath ruffled the pallid ghost ferns that lined their path; not a feathery flake fell from the snow-wreathed plumes of hemlock and spruce. The white birches stood in suits of glittering mail.

It was so silent, so strange, so spotless, that Alice was awed. "It is like the Snow Queen's home where Gerda went to find little Kay," she thought.

"Is n't this a wild rabbit's track, Uncle Phil?" asked Tom. Before Mr. Lansing could reply, there was a flash of gray and the scud of four little frightened feet.

"Good for you, Bunny!" cried Uncle Phil; "but no one in this party is after your ladyship."

"Even the wild rabbit has a winter dress to match the snow," said Miss Merriam. "Nature is always looking out for her children, Tom."

"Here are a lot of wood-mice tracks," said Uncle Phil, pausing by a large nut-tree. "I fancy the little rascals have their storehouses not far away."

"Oh, Uncle Phil," cried Alice, "mother read me a story from Mr. Burroughs about some mice who had a hoard of beech-nuts in a sugar-maple tree.

"There were two doors, — one a little hole up high, the other a larger one at the foot, leading to the storehouse.

"A red squirrel tried to break in at the upper door. While he was trying, the mice carried out the nuts by the lower door to a hole they had underground. Don't you think the squirrel was vexed when he found out the trick?"

"I don't doubt it, and I can imagine that the mice laughed in their whiskers to think how neatly they were fooling Mr. Squirrel."

"Tell me, Uncle Phil," said Alice, who had been gazing up into the pines, "why the lower

stems of the pines are all dead? When you look up, there are very few live branches overhead. All the needles seem to be on the outside of the tree and toward the ends of the branches."

"That's so in 'most any big tree," said Tom. "The leaves are on the outside, like a tent or the walls of a house. Have n't you noticed that when you were lying on the ground and looking up?"

"Why, yes; so I have. I have seen the birds fly to and fro from branch to branch, when you could n't see them outside," said Alice.

"That means a very real page from a tree's life-history," said Mr. Lansing. "Now let us think a little. What keeps the leaves alive, Tom?"

"Air, rain, sunshine from outside, and sap from inside," said Tom slowly.

"Do all the leaves have the same chance?"

"I should think the ones on the outside would get the most sunshine."

"Just so; and every leaf-cluster stretches and strains to get near the coveted place. If you should look at an oak branch, you would see that nearly all the leaves are on the ends of the branches.

"Every stem has made itself long, and the leaf-blade has reached out in almost a horizontal position just to get to the sunshine. But at the top of the tree, where there is no such fierce crowding, the stems are shorter and the leaves take various positions."

"I suppose many of the leaves get covered up and have no chance at all," said Alice, much interested.

"Yes, that is specially true of the pine. After a while the lower branches give up the struggle, as we see here. But there is another reason. Our single pines in the north pasture are not like these."

"These pines are all together; none of them has enough room," said Alice.

"You are right, dear; crowding of any kind affects growth."

Just then a shrill chatter came from the tops of some large nut-trees.

"Blue-jays!" said Miss Merriam; "the cold weather has been hard on them lately. I fed a dozen or more from our dining-room windows yesterday."

"I heard a *redpoll* trill only this morning," said Uncle Phil. "We ought to see the little fellows in this wood."

"I used to think the woods in winter were dead and still," said Tom. "But we've found rabbits and mouse-tracks; we've heard crows and blue-jays. There! is n't that a woodpecker?"

"Very likely," replied Mr. Lansing, "and, we may add, owls in the hollow trees, muskrats in the swamps, and — look here — fox-tracks! The Club will be on the hunt before long. You would better stay indoors, Reynard!"



#### XLVIII.—THE TREES IN WINTER

“How tender and how slow, in sunset’s cheer,  
Far on the hill, our quiet tree-tops fade!  
A broidery of northern seaweed, laid  
Long in a brook, were scarce more fine and clear.  
Frost, and sad light, and windless atmosphere  
Have breathed on them, and of their frailties made  
Beauty more sweet than summer’s builded shade,  
Whose green domes fall, to bring this wonder here.”

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY.

“**A**LICE,” said Mrs. Pryor, “will you take the Club books to Colonel Appleton after dinner?”

"Oh, yes, mother dear," replied Alice eagerly, "and may I stay — if I am asked?"

"I think so," said Mrs. Pryor; "only not too long."

Alice found her friend pacing up and down his avenue.

"Have you come to play with me?" he asked roughly, as he shook hands.

"If you wish to have me," replied Alice.

"Suppose we take the books in and then come out again. I like this mild weather when I can stay out. I've been laid up with rheumatism since Tuesday. So glad you've come to play with me," said the colonel, squeezing the child-hand, for Alice was a great pet of his.

They left the books in the library, and Alice went to the parlor to speak to Madam Appleton, who sat knitting by the fire.

A great mastiff arose from the hearth-rug and offered a huge paw to Alice. A red-and-green parrot sat on its perch in the bay window, and remarked, as Alice greeted Madam Appleton, "A cold day for chickens!"

"Yes, it has been very cold weather," repeated Madam, as she kissed the rosy cheek. "I hope you are very careful, dear, not to expose yourself. Little girls cannot be too prudent in winter."

Alice smiled as she remembered her trip to the woods, and her long hours of coasting and skating and tumbling about in the drifts.

"That's right, clear out!" said Polly politely, as the door closed.

"Where would you like to go, Alice?" inquired Colonel Appleton.

"I like the avenue," replied Alice. "Your elms are beautiful. Father says there are no such trees in the whole county as yours."

"I agree with him," said the colonel, looking very much pleased. "And are you also fond of trees, little maid?"

"I just *love* them," cried Alice. "They seem like people. If I were not a little girl I'd choose to be a great, splendid tree. I like them in winter, too, when the leaves are off: you can see the shape so well. Our teachers have been asking us to notice them."

"What have you found out so far?"

"Only a little. The American elm is like a Greek burial urn. Uncle Phil says the main branches spout up and fall away like a fountain.

"The maple is dome-shaped, and the hemlocks and spruces are like cones. A row of poplars are like so many quills" —

"You have used your eyes well, Ladybird. Now, I think it is very interesting to see how the trees branch. Look at the old willow where we have had so many tea-drinkings. How does that branch out?"

"The trunk ends where the branches begin.



They spring away from it in a bunch, like the spokes of a wheel. I never noticed it before."

"Look at the Lombardy poplar near the gate. Does the trunk divide?"

"No, it runs to the very top. The stem must do the same in the hemlocks and spruces."

"Now here's a maple: how does that branch out?"

"Something like the poplar, only the branches spread more, and are more nearly horizontal. The trunk runs to the top also, and the limbs alternate."

"Can you find a tree where the limbs are opposite?"

Alice looked around over the park. Near the terrace stood a noble beech, the glory of the estate. Often had she lain under its shade in summer and watched the pale, golden-green lights that fell upon the turf as the sun sifted through its tender leaves. Such a green never came through any other kind of foliage, so father said.

Now that crown of verdure had fallen, and Alice could see how horizontally the branches were placed, and that they were opposite as well.

"Yes, you are right," said the colonel: "our beech is as fine an example of that kind of branching as one could wish to see. A growing tree is such a wonderful thing. From the moment the sap begins to stir, up to the time when everything

is frost-bound, the tree is growing in a way we can scarcely realize.

"Think of the thousands of tiny rootlets searching about in the soil for the hidden springs! Think of the millions of little mouths on the underside of the leaves as eagerly seeking for what the air and sunshine can give!

"In storm or sunshine it stands,—growing, growing, always doing its best. You were not far out of the way in saying that trees made you think of people, Alice. They are braver, wiser, more prudent than we think. Let me show you what I mean."

Colonel Appleton pulled down a horse-chestnut branch and pointed out the buds to her. "Do you see any difference in them?" he inquired.

"Some are larger than others."

"Where do the largest buds come?"

"Out at the ends of the twigs."

"Now these very smallest ones are not developed, may never be any different. But if any accident kills the main buds, these smaller buds will take their places and grow as bravely as possible. Is that not prudent, Alice?"

"Why do some trees have such wrinkled bark and others smooth?" said Alice, looking at a great elm near the gate.

"Come where we chopped down a tree, a few days ago, and I'll try to show you."

The great trunk lay upon the snow, its freshly

exposed surface shining bright yellow against the whiteness.

"What do you see there?" the colonel asked, tapping it with his cane. Alice stooped and looked at the wood.

"I see rings," she said, "rings and rings, in the wood, and they'll show plainer when the wood is drier."

"Every year the tree grows one ring about itself. As the wooden cylinder grows thicker, what does it do to the bark, Alice?"

"It must push against it."

"Yes, the bark has to stretch, just as your skin does, as you grow bigger and bigger. By-and-by, however, the bark stretches all it can, and then it begins to crack. Sometimes the bark grows so thick and strong that the trunk cannot expand. Then the tree becomes what we call 'bark-bound.'"

"It shows, especially in fruit-trees, that the soil has grown poor and that the trees have been neglected. We have to wash the trunk in soft soap or lye to soften the bark."

"How much you know!" said Alice, looking up into the kind old face with love and reverence.

"You are so good to us always."

"It is because you bring the spring and summer to my autumn and winter," said the dear old man.

"We love you so," went on Alice earnestly.

"When you were so ill, we cried and cried. Even ~~some of~~ the boys cried in school, and none of us

could work. Oh, you won't get ill again? You are going to stay with us a long, long time?"

Alice's voice trembled, and tears sparkled in her dark-blue eye.

"Oh, yes, Sweetheart, — a long time yet, let us hope," said the colonel, much moved.

"'Grow old along with me,  
The best is yet to be!'

"We'll have many a good time together under the old trees."

So the two friends walked on happily under the leafless branches and in the pleasant winter sunshine; for, with child and old man alike, it was summer in the heart.

## XLIX. — THE CHICKADEE

PIPED a tiny voice hard by,  
Gay and polite, a cheerful cry,  
Chick-chickadeedee ! saucy note,  
Out of sound heart and merry throat,  
As if it said, " Good day, good sir !  
Fine afternoon, old passenger !  
Happy to meet you in these places,  
Where January brings few faces."  
This poet, though he live apart,  
Moved by his hospitable heart,  
Sped, when I passed his sylvan fort,  
To do the honors of his court,  
As fits a feathered lord of land ;  
Flew near, with soft wing grazed my hand ;  
Hopped on the bough, then, darting low,  
Prints his small impress on the snow,  
Shows feats of his gymnastic play,  
Head downward, clinging to the spray. . . .  
This scrap of valor, just for play,  
Fronts the north wind in waistcoat gray.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

## L.—A DAY IN FEBRUARY

"The day is ending,  
The night is descending;  
The marsh is frozen,  
The river dead.

"Through clouds like ashes  
The red sun flashes  
On village windows  
That glimmer red."

LONGFELLOW.



It is hard to have a birthday without any party or presents or mother, either." Alice's kind words brought a sudden comfort to Tom's sore little heart. It was the twenty-eighth of February, and the dear lad was nine years old. He could not remember a year before when the birthday candles had not been lighted at his party. How forlorn seemed the contrast!

Dear Grandma was very ill, and Mr. and Mrs. Bennett were at her bedside. Tom was alone in the house with the servants, and no one had thought

of his birthday. He knew that sooner or later some one would remember him. So he crowded back his heartache, and tried to be as busy and cheerful as possible.

It was a dull, dreary day. The gray skies overhead looked as if they might at any moment send down a crowd of spiteful little snowflakes, armed with darts to sting and annoy. The black trees lifted gaunt arms against the sullen sky.

A sad wind moaned through the dry, shivering grasses by the river's brink. And the river itself, gay singer in summer days, as it ran through daisied meadows, now lay silent under its ice-blanket.

"Come over after dinner, Tom," said Alice at parting. "We'll play beanbags, or look at the new photographs Uncle Phil sent."

As Alice entered the house Mr. Pryor met her, his finger on his lips.

"Mother is ill," he whispered.

Alice's little face lost every trace of color. She tried to speak, but could only sob brokenly.

"Why, Sweetheart, don't be alarmed," said father hastily, putting his arm about her. "Dear mother is in no danger, and you may see her after dinner."

"Now you and I are to eat together: won't that be fun? Emma has made corn fritters, for one thing, and you know what a fellow I am for Emma's fritters."

The red stole up in Alice's cheeks, and a great tear made its way down. Father kissed the tear away, feeling that he had been very clumsy in his dealings with this lovely child-heart.

After dinner they went upstairs together. Mrs. Pryor greeted Alice with a bright smile and loving kiss. "Your sister has been waiting to see you," she said, turning back the sheet.

Alice's heart gave a great leap and her head whirled; for a moment she could not see.

"God has sent us another dear child," said Mrs. Pryor, lifting the wee hand and placing it in Alice's.

"I feel as if she were more yours than mine; you have wanted a sister for such a long time."

"Yes," said Mr. Pryor, "this is Alice's baby, and her big sister shall give her a name. What shall it be, Sweetheart?"

Alice looked down upon the new sister with a heart full of joy. A baby sister to love and care for and watch every day! Could she ever be good enough, kind enough, careful enough, to deserve such a blessing?

It was so tiny, so fragile, so soft, with its little downy head and rose-leaf hands! Alice knelt by the bed and kissed the wee face: in all this happiness she had not yet been able to speak.

Mr. and Mrs. Pryor watched her with satisfied faces; her welcome to the newcomer could not be doubted.



"And may I really name her?" she said.

"Yes, dear," answered Mrs. Pryor, "it shall be whatever you wish."

"I'm named Alice Mary, for you, mother, and I should like to have my sister 'Theodora Arnold,' for dear Miss Merriam and father."

"We could not ask for a better name," said Mrs. Pryor. "Theodora means 'Gift of God,' and our dear baby is surely that."

"So is Miss Merriam to all her scholars," said the loyal little girl, with a sweet, grave face.

Just then Baby Theodora curled her little fingers tightly about Alice's hand, and the joy of the child's heart was too deep for speech.

Maggie tapped at the door to announce that Master Bennett was below. Alice pleaded that he might come up, and Tom entered, his great eyes full of wonder.

"Oh, Tom," cried Alice, "see my new sister, — all my own! She's Theodora: that means 'Gift of God.' Isn't she a darling?"

Tom gazed at the wee stranger, and his lip twitched.

"I don't see why I can't have a brother as well as other boys," he murmured with a great throb of loneliness.

"Tom, dear," said Alice, "she shall be your sister, too. We'll own her together. You shall play with her and teach her, and love her all you *please*.

"Oh, mother, Theodora came on Tom's birthday. Tom should have her as much as I." So saying, Alice took the other little hand and laid it in Tom's. Just then something jumped upon the bed and sniffed around suspiciously.

"Rags, you naughty fellow, I told you to stay downstairs!" and Tom seized the intruder.

"Do let him look at Baby just a moment. Oh, mother, he's kissing her!"

Theodora wrinkled up her face and began to cry. Mr. Pryor laughingly hustled the three from the room. "*Will it kill her?*" whispered Tom, aghast.

"Oh, no, indeed, only the mother and Baby must go to sleep now."

"She's so little," said Tom to Alice, when they found themselves alone.

"But she'll grow: we were as small as that once," replied Alice kindly. "I'm going right over to tell dear Miss Merriam."

"I'm going round to tell all my friends," barked Rags. "I'll show them what a baby we have. If any bad dog tries to hurt her I'll —" And Rags gave a tremendous growl.

"This is a beautiful day," cried Alice, dancing along. "Tom, Tom! see what I've found!" On the bush by the way was spring's first visitor, — darling Pussy Willow, in brown coat and gray hood.

Alice picked it gently. "I'm going to carry

you to Miss Merriam," she said happily. "You and my sister and the spring have all come together." The gray skies parted, and a sunbeam stole down from a rift of perfect blue, and kissed the bright face, with its smiling lips and eager eyes.



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